

Getting Our Bearings and Beginning the Adventure 1

DAY ONE

It is natural to pray.

You may or may not have had a meal yet today. But before the day is past you will have eaten something—probably three meals, and maybe a snack between. Eating is natural and necessary.

If you haven't eaten yet today, the chances are you have had a cup of coffee or tea, or a glass of water or milk. Drinking is natural and necessary.

Like eating and drinking, prayer is not something foreign to our human nature. Prayer is perhaps the deepest impulse of the *human* soul.

Samuel Johnson was once asked what was the strongest argument for prayer. He replied, "There is no argument for prayer." He did not mean that prayer is irrational, or that there are no convincing arguments for the practice of it, but that prayer is natural and universal. We all pray, and we pray because it is a part of our native endowment.

Prayer is related to our search for meaning, our longing for relationship, our need to grow. Prayer, however practiced, is an expression of our hunger for God. This hunger is a part of who we are. Augustine's word is more than a pious cliché. "For thee were we made, O God, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee."

Again and again the psalmist reminds us of the naturalness and universality of our hunger for God.

O God, thou art my God, I seek thee,
my soul thirsts for thee;
my flesh faints for thee,
as in a dry and weary land where no water is.
(Psalm 63:1, RSV)

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus recognizes this natural hungering after God. More than that, he claims this hungering will be satisfied.

Blessed are those who hunger and
thirst for righteousness, for they
shall be satisfied.
(Matthew 5:6, RSV)

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

A part of our adventure is reflecting and recording. The importance of

written notes will grow in meaning as we move along. Reflect and record in response to this guidance.

1

1. Our society offers us an abundance of food and drink on a twenty-four-hour basis. Have you ever been deprived of this abundance and really experienced hunger or thirst? What did it feel like when you finally found nourishment?

As a young teen I had run away from home and was hungry for days at a time. When I finally ate - I ate as tho' I would never eat again. I was enormously grateful for the food - one time a hot dog & a potato knish & an orange drink, but nothing ever tasted so delicious.

All of us hunger for God. How does that hunger express itself in your life? List two or three ways.

Sometimes almost as a pain when I cannot get close enough to God - at one time I was so unhappy about this Church's distance from God as I understood God, that I cried for a week - almost stopping.

2. How do you see the hunger affecting others? Think of specific persons. Name them and in a phrase or sentence indicate how that hunger is manifesting itself in them.

I know some who chase after multiple religious experiences - but who are totally distant from God - and hungering.

DP, MP, JT,

3. Looking at others often helps us look at ourselves. Write two or three sentences describing how you feel right now about your hunger for God.

I miss the joy of my salvation. I hunger for the closeness to God that I have felt in the past.

4. As you begin this adventure, consider this word from the letter of James: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously and without reproaching, and it will be given him" (James 1:5, RSV).

I believe that the Holy Spirit of God is the great teacher. I have trusted the Spirit in preparing this workbook. Your part is to trust God to use this process to help you learn to pray. Right now, in your own heart, make this affirmation:

I want to learn to pray.
I open my mind to you, God.
Teach me to pray.

During the day

If your mind comes back to this experience any time during this day or night, try to remember the persons you named in whom you have seen the hunger for God working. Simply ask God to bless them and satisfy their longing. Be open to God's using *you* in meeting their need.

DAY TWO

It is not easy to pray.

As *living* beings, we breathe, we eat, we drink, we sleep. As *human* beings, we breathe, eat, drink, sleep, *and pray*. It's a part of our nature as human beings to pray. This is one of the ways we express our natural hungering for God. Natural it is; easy it isn't!

There is a difference between the tendency to pray and the practice of prayer. We have the tendency to pray—the reflexive crying out in the face of pain or trouble, the spontaneous shout of joy in the presence of beauty, accomplishment, fulfillment. We give expression to it sporadically according to the moods and circumstances of our life.

To live a life of prayer is something else. To pray consistently is not easy. It requires commitment and discipline. Don't condemn yourself if you find praying difficult. Most of us do. Even those whom we call "saints" found or find praying difficult. Read their journals and confessions and you will find them struggling, searching, wrestling, seeking to make the natural tendency to pray become a natural practice in everyday life. The disciples didn't find it easy.

And they went to a place which was called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I pray." And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch." And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what thou wilt." And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer him. And he came the third time, and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come; the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."

(Mark 14:32-42, RSV)

Discipline, then, is a part of a life of prayer. The purpose of discipline, however, is to enhance and increase the spontaneous dimension of praying.

REFLECTING AND RECORDING**1**

1. Look at the last two years of your life. Plot your prayer life in terms of highs and lows on the time line below.

two years ago one year ago now

2. Identify and write here the major circumstances or events in the high and low periods of your prayer life.

3. What primary difficulties do you have in prayer?

During the day

Think about this: Christ wants me to pray naturally, but he understands my difficulties in praying in a disciplined way. He wants me to find a creative discipline which frees me to pray more deeply and meaningfully.

Yesterday, you named some people and noted how you see the hunger for God manifested in them. Did you remember them during the day? Today, why not call them on the phone, or write them a note? If you feel comfortable doing so, you may tell them precisely why you are calling or writing (this will be a good way to share your own experience with them), or you may simply let them know that you are thinking of them and that you care about them. This kind of response will make your praying a *living* experience.

DAY THREE

"O taste and see that the Lord is good."

I sought the Lord, and he answered me,
and delivered me from all my fears.



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Look to him, and be radiant;
so your faces shall never be
ashamed.

This poor man cried, and the Lord
heard him,
and saved him out of all his troubles.
The angel of the Lord encamps
around those who fear him,
and delivers them.
O taste and see that the Lord is good!
(Psalm 34:4-8, RSV)

As you continue your adventure today, spend five minutes in silence, thinking about that one phrase: "O taste and see that the Lord is good!" Don't argue in your mind about whether you would express this thought in the same way; just get at the thought itself. Let it tumble around and say to you what it has to say. As you begin your silence now, repeat the phrase over and over *five* times as follows:

O taste and see that the Lord is good!
O taste and see that the Lord is good!
O taste and see that the Lord is good!
O taste and see that the Lord is good!
O taste and see that the Lord is good!

In the margin, make notes on what comes to you in your silence.

In prayer, we begin with God and end with God. *The God to whom we pray is good!* This great and unique assertion of the Christian faith is a primary foundation upon which we build our life of prayer. We know that God's goodness in giving us life and our world has been misused for evil purposes. We often experience much that is not good. Yet, God always offers us the good in all circumstances. This is exactly what Jesus said in some of his boldest words about prayer: "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father . . . give good things to those who ask him?" (Matthew 7:11, RSV). *The God to whom we pray is good.*

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

Look at prayer as you have practiced it. Has it been rooted in the conviction that God is good?

What does this say about the way many of us "beg" God to do something?

Augustine said, "He (God) loves every one as though there were but one of us to love." (Think of five simple phrases that register your response to this fact, such as, "Never thought of it that way," "Hard to believe," etc.)

1

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

During the day

"O taste and see that the Lord is good." Put this truth into your own words (such as "May all my senses experience that the Lord is good"), repeat it to yourself, and think about it as often as you can bring it to mind.

DAY FOUR

God is good and I can communicate with him.

"O taste and see that the Lord is good." God is good and he wants to give good gifts to his children. This is a primary assumption in prayer.

A second assumption is that *communication with God is possible*. That seems so simple and so obvious, but is it? This has been one of the greatest difficulties in my life—to believe that I could actually talk with God, that he would *hear* and *listen* and *respond* to me.

This is an enormous assumption that needs to be fixed firmly in our minds at the outset of this adventure in prayer. What it means is that I, among all the millions of people in the world, can have personal communication with the Father.

The dominant image of God in the New Testament is "father." This was Jesus' descriptive word about God's nature. In the Sermon on the Mount, he used this figure to help us get our concerns into perspective.

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

(Matthew 6:25-26, RSV)

God is like a shepherd who misses even one lost sheep from his flock, like a housewife who sweeps a house clean to find one lost coin, like a father who grieves for one prodigal son who has left home (Luke 15). "It is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish" (Matthew 18:14, RSV).

Take five minutes and think about that. God cares for each one of us as individuals. Is it hard for you to accept that? Do you believe it? Have you

been praying as though you believed it? God cares for _____.
 _____ (Write your full name in the blank.)
 Take five minutes now, and center your attention on this monumental truth.

One of the characteristics of a caring father is the desire to communicate with his children. This desire to communicate may be expressed directly (as in the interest and concern he shows in being with them) or indirectly (as in times when he withholds the wisdom of his experience so as to encourage his children to think and judge for themselves). If God is our Father, then communication, directly or more indirectly, must be at the heart of our relationship..

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

Meditate now upon God as a caring Father who wants to communicate with you. He wants to hear about what you are feeling, thinking, and desiring. If you really believe that about God, what are the five most important things you would like to say to him?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

In a closing prayer say "thank you" to God in whatever way you would say "thank you" to a caring father.

During the day

A caring Father wants to stay "in touch" with his children. During the day, remember that

God is good;
 He cares;
 He wants you to communicate with him.

Find a few quiet minutes at different times during this day and simply talk to God about what's important to you today.

DAY FIVE

Prayer is a privilege, not a duty.

1

What you have been experiencing the past four days, indeed your entire past experience in prayer, will determine your response to the great idea we want to consider today. *Prayer is a privilege, not a duty.*

Earlier this week we thought about how discipline seems to take the spontaneity out of prayer. Many of us see prayer as a discipline, as a duty, something we must do. We've been taught that we *ought* to pray, and when we don't, we feel guilty. We will take a giant step forward in our adventure when we cease seeing prayer as a duty and begin to look upon it as a privilege. As a privilege, the discipline of praying becomes a creative freedom, not a bondage of duty. Consider this testimony of Sir Wilfred Grenfell:

The privilege of prayer to me is one of the most cherished possessions, because faith and experience alike convince me that God sees and answers, and his answers I never venture to criticise. It is only my part to ask. It is entirely his to give or withhold, as he knows best. If it were otherwise, I would not dare to pray at all. In the quiet of home, in the heat of life and strife, in the face of death, the privilege of speech with God is inestimable. I value it more because it calls for nothing that the wayfaring man, though a fool, cannot give—that is, the simplest expression to his simplest desire. When I can neither see, nor hear, nor speak, still I can pray so that God can hear. When I finally pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I expect to pass through it in conversation with him.¹

There is a lot in this; reread it slowly.

Put that testimony of a great Christian disciple alongside the word from the psalmist whose hunger for God we encountered on the first day of our prayer adventure:

O God, thou art my God, I seek thee,
my soul thirsts for thee;
my flesh faints for thee,
as in a dry and weary land
where no water is.
So I have looked upon thee in the
sanctuary,
beholding thy power and glory.
Because thy steadfast love is better
than life,
my lips will praise thee.
So I will bless thee as long as I live;
I will lift up my hands and call
on thy name.

My soul is feasted as with marrow
and fat,
and my mouth praises thee with
joyful lips,
when I think of thee upon my bed,
and meditate on thee in
the watches of the night;
for thou hast been my help,
and in the shadow of thy wings
I sing for joy.
My soul clings to thee;
thy right hand upholds me.
(Psalm 63:1, 3-8, RSV)

Like love and friendship, music, books, art, laughter, and play, *prayer* is a *privilege*, a great opportunity to be sought. Not to pray is an act of self-robbery. We are free to pray. The privilege is open to all of us. The privilege is communion with God, feeling his presence, being aware of his guidance. Try to experience his presence now.

Get in a relaxed position. You may want to lie on your back. If you choose to sit, put both feet on the floor. Adjust yourself in the chair so that you are comfortable. Close your eyes and imagine Christ present with you.

Repeat aloud, but quietly, three times: **Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ, Jesus**

Christ. Now, very quietly, deliberately, reverently, with long pauses between each sounding, repeat again three times: **Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ.**

Continue to imagine Christ's presence with you and be quiet in his presence for two or three minutes.

Now, read aloud, very slowly and deliberately, the twenty-third psalm.

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
he leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the
paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the
shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for
thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff
they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence
of my enemies: thou anointest my head with
oil; my cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all
the days of my life: and I will dwell in
the house of the Lord for ever.

(KJV)

Stay quiet now, letting the thoughts fill your mind and heart. You may want to go back and read it quietly again and pause to ponder the particular words that have special meaning to you today. Lay your workbook down and spend five or ten minutes thinking about this psalm.

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

Did you have trouble practicing that kind of "thought-centering" for five minutes? That's OK. We are learning; God accepts us where we are.

Writing your response to the following question will help you reflect upon what you have experienced in your consideration of Psalm 23.

Have you actually felt God present with you in these past few minutes?

At what point did you begin to sense his presence?

A number of images are present in Psalm 23: a shepherd leading us, green pastures, still waters, restoration of the soul, paths of righteousness, shadow of death, comfort, anointing with oil, a running-over cup. Name the images that are especially meaningful to you. What are their meanings?

Thank God for his presence with you now and ask him to make you sensitive to his presence during the next twenty-four hours.

1*During the day*

Before you leave your place now, select three specific times during the next twenty-four hours when you will deliberately seek to be conscious of God's presence (as you go to coffee break, during a mealtime, as you go to or from work, while you are waiting for an appointment, etc.). Write them down as an act of commitment.

a.

b.

c.

DAY SIX

Praying to experience God as real.

As you begin this time alone today, reflect upon your experience yesterday. Did you follow through with seeking to be conscious of God's presence during the day as suggested? What meaning did it have? Evaluate for yourself how you did with that exercise. Use this space for your evaluation and response.

Recall the other days of our adventure. You may want to review some of the things you've written on those days. Be honest with yourself and write a few sentences about what you are feeling concerning this adventure, the creative discipline it calls for, the problems you have encountered. Then, ask God to help you make creative use of these experiences as you continue this adventure.

The first sentence of Psalm 63 is a great personal claim: "O God, thou art my God." *The heart of prayer is communion.* Go back and read the part of Psalm 63 printed in the workbook for yesterday.

Nothing is real in our experience except those things with which we habitually deal. Persons say that they do not pray because God is not real to them, but a truer statement would be that God is not real because they do not pray. Harry Emerson Fosdick puts this graphically:

The practice of prayer is necessary to make God not merely an idea held in the mind but a Presence recognized in the life. In an exclamation that came from the heart of personal religion, the psalmist cried, "O God, thou art my God" (Psalm 63:1). To stand afar off and say "O God," is neither difficult nor searching . . . but it is an inward and searching matter to say, "O God, thou art my God." The first is theology, the second is religion; the first involves only opinion, the second involves vital experience; the first can be reached by thought, the second must be reached by prayer; the first leaves God afar off, the second alone makes him real. To be sure, all Christian service where we consciously ally ourselves with God's purpose, and all insight into history where we see God's providence at work, help to make God real to us; but there is an inward certainty of God that can come only from personal communion with God.*

Is this a new thought to you? Have you failed to pray consistently because God did not seem real to you? What an insight: *God does not seem real because we do not pray.* Do you see the implication of that? If we want to *real-ize* God, we must pray. Ponder that for a few minutes. It is a valuable thought *about* God. How does it fit into your experience of God?

It may be that we will never learn to pray, never have any ongoing, creatively disciplined prayer life until our desire for communion with God is so great that we will be driven to prayer. Consider that thought for a few minutes. How great is your hunger for communion with God?

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

We began this adventure with this affirmation:

I want to learn to pray.
I open my mind to you, God,
Teach me to pray.

Can you turn that into an ardent prayer?

O God, I want you to be *my* God.
I want you to be real to me as
a vital experience.
I am beginning to realize that
such an experience can be
mine through prayer. So
teach me to pray.

Write such a prayer in your own words.

During the day

Take this prayer with you all through this day: "O God, thou art *my* God."

1

DAY SEVEN

Prayer is relationship.

Prayer is relationship. It is *being* with God. It is *meeting*. It is *being* with others. It is a personal relationship where you and God move from a "hello" of politeness to an "embrace" of love. It is communion.

All other dimensions of prayer must take second place to this primary dimension. "Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deuteronomy 6:4-5, RSV).

Relationship is a personal matter. In prayer we are relating specifically to God who claims our total allegiance, calling us to love him with all our heart, soul, and might.

Archbishop Anthony Bloom talks about this in a provocative way. He says that a relationship becomes meaningful and real the moment you begin to single out a person from the crowd. Prayer becomes real when it is no longer a relationship in the third person, but in the first and second persons, when God becomes more than the remote "He" or "The Almighty," and becomes the singular and unique "Thou" or "You." The psalmist had discovered this: "O God, thou art *my* God."

Anthony Bloom carries this analogy of name to the ultimate in personal relationship: we name a person what he or she means to us. This may be a nickname. He says David reached this point when he cried out to God, "Thou, my joy!"

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High,
who abides in the shadow of the Almighty,
will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress;
my God, in whom I trust."

(Psalm 91:1-2, RSV)

The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?

(Psalm 27:1, RSV)

The point is that prayer is reaching its height when we name God out of our experience of him. "O you, my joy!" "O God, my rock!" "O wonderful Savior."

And this naming of God determines how we experience him! Some can only name God in ways that lead to their experiencing him as enemy or absentee landlord. But we, naming him as we have come to know him in Jesus and in our relationship with him, can experience him as our most intimate Friend, as our Father.

This naming can transform and put depth into our praying. We can be honest to God. Prayer then becomes the sorting out of our feelings as we bring them to God who cares and understands. It is the clarifying of our wishes and our needs and getting perspective in light of his love and will.

Let's be specific in our experience of this relationship today.

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

How will you address God today? By what name or names will you call him?

a.

b.

c.

Not only does relationship mean *naming* God for what he is to us, it means trusting the relationship and bringing our feelings to God who cares and understands. What are the big feelings or needs you need to bring to God today?

a.

b.

c.

What about your wishes? Lay those out specifically before God. Jot them down.

a.

b.

c.

Look at your wishes now in light of God's love and what you believe is his will. Do you believe now that your wishes are in harmony with God's love and will? Then joyously ask God to grant your wishes.

1

During the day

This may be your touchiest assignment yet, but try it. Select a person with whom you have a close relationship, a person you trust, someone with whom you will be spending a little time today (or make the opportunity to spend some time with such a person). Talk to that person about your prayer-adventure. Especially identify and discuss the similarities of your relationship with your friend to your relationship with God. (If you have trouble with this, go back and reread today's instructions about prayer as relationship.)

If you are participating in a group, read the following directions so that you will be familiar with what may be expected of you.

GROUP MEETING FOR WEEK ONE

INTRODUCTION

These group sessions will be most meaningful as they reflect the experience of all the participants. The guide is simply an effort to facilitate personal sharing. Therefore, do not be rigid in following these suggestions. The leader, especially, should seek to be sensitive to what is going on in the lives of the participants and to focus the group sharing on those experiences. Ideas are important. We should wrestle with new ideas as well as with ideas with which we disagree. It is important, however, that the group meeting not become a debate about ideas. The emphasis should be upon persons—experiences, feelings, and meaning.

As the group comes to the place where all can share honestly and openly what is happening in their lives, the more meaningful the experience will be. This does not mean sharing only the good, or positive; share also the struggles, the difficulties, the negatives. Building a life of prayer involves struggle and change. We may not always "feel" God's presence. Therefore, praying is not dependent upon feeling. Don't be afraid to share your "dry periods," your valleys, your plateaus, as well as your mountains.

SHARING TOGETHER

1. You may begin your time together by allowing time for each person in the group to share his or her most meaningful day with the workbook this week. The leader should begin this sharing. Tell why that particular day was so meaningful.

2. Now share your most difficult day. Tell what you experienced, and why it was so difficult.

3. Much of what we know and have experienced of prayer has come through other persons. Which person, in your experience, has had the most influence on your prayer life? Share not only the name but how he or she influenced you. Was it because prayers were answered? Simple faith? Loving spirit? Absolute trust? Perseverance? Discipline? Joy?

4. Some of us have difficulties and hangups with prayer because of past experiences. Is there a "skeleton" in your prayer closet—someone or some experience that affected your prayer life negatively? Name the "skeleton," and tell how you overcame or are presently wrestling with the negative experience.

5. Let each person in the group share the most meaningful prayer experience of his or her life.

PRAYING TOGETHER

Corporate prayer is one of the great blessings of Christian community. Next week we will deal with Jesus' saying, "If two of you shall agree. . . ." There is power in corporate prayer, and it is important that this dimension be included in our prayer pilgrimage.

It is also important that you feel comfortable in this and that no pressure be placed on anyone to pray aloud. *Silent* corporate prayer is as vital and meaningful as verbal corporate prayer. Hopefully, the group will spend at least fifteen minutes (usually at the close) of each group meeting in corporate prayer.

God does not need to hear our verbal words to hear our prayers. Silence, where thinking is centered and attention is focused, may provide our deepest periods of prayer. There is power, however, in a community on a common journey verbalizing their thoughts and feelings to God in the presence of their fellow pilgrims.

Verbal prayers should be offered spontaneously as a person chooses to pray aloud—not "let's go around the circle now, and each one pray."

Suggestions for this "praying together" time will be given each week. The leader for the week should regard these only as suggestions. What is happening in the meeting—the mood, the needs that are expressed, the timing—should determine the direction of the group praying together. Here are some possibilities for this closing period.

1. Let the group think back over the sharing that has taken place during this session. What personal needs or concerns came out of the sharing? Begin to speak these aloud—any person verbalizing a need or a concern that has been expressed. Don't hesitate to mention a concern that you may have picked up from another, i.e., "Mary isn't able to be with us this week because her son is in the hospital. Let's pray for her son and for her."

It will be helpful for each person to make notes of the concerns and needs that are mentioned. Enter deliberately into a period of silence. Let the leader verbalize each of these needs successively, allowing for a brief period following each so that persons in the group may center their attention and focus their prayers on the person, need, or concern mentioned. All of this will be in silence as each person prays in his or her own way.

A. The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the results of the study of the effect of the treatment on the response of the subjects to the treatment.

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2. Let the leader close this time of sharing by saying something like, "One day this week we dealt with the thought 'God loves every one as though there were but one of us to love.' Let's close this period of praying together by having as many of you as will simply give a word or a phrase that registers your response to that statement as it relates to God loves *you* as though *you* were the only one to love. Give your response aloud, and let us pause briefly between each response." When as many as wish have shared, the leader may say something like, "Let us affirm the love of God by saying together 'amen' . . . AMEN!"

1

With Christ in the School of Prayer **2**

DAY ONE

"When you pray . . . go into a room by yourself."

When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; they love to say their prayers standing up in synagogue and at the street-corners, for everyone to see them. I tell you this: they have their reward already. But when you pray, go into a room by yourself, shut the door, and pray to your Father who is there in the secret place; and your Father who sees what is secret will reward you.

(Matthew 6:5-6, NEB)

We began this adventure by saying that ultimately the Holy Spirit is the great Teacher. God is the beginning and end of prayer. Since Jesus is the revelation of God, we can look to him as the revealer of a life of prayer, and also as the teacher who has God's unique instruction for us.

Because prayer was such an important part of Jesus' life, it is no wonder that he had some strong directives about it in his Sermon on the Mount. He spoke about prayer on many occasions, but Matthew indicates the essentials of his teachings were set forth at the beginning of his public ministry.

When you pray, go into a room by yourself, shut the door and pray to your Father who is there in the secret place.

It is clear from this word of Jesus that prayer is a personal matter. It is the communication that goes on between God and me. The emphasis here is upon *solitude*.

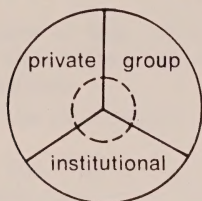
Now there is a difference between being alone and being alone *with God*. Even in the hectic, crowded conditions in which many of us live, most of us are often alone. Jesus is urging us to choose aloneness, to find solitude for a purpose: to be alone *with God*.

If we are going to have a life of prayer, Jesus is insistent that we must go into our room, shut the door, and be alone with God. To be alone with God is creative, purposeful solitude. This doesn't mean that we have to be behind a physical door to meet this condition. The emphasis is upon privacy and the deliberate effort on our part to be with the Father "who is there in the secret place."

Jesus knew that the ultimate struggle takes place in the private recesses of the self. Our wrestling with "principalities and power" (Ephesians 6:12) may indeed become a social or political battle. But we never get to that battle and *stay with it* unless we engage in the struggle within.

Yesterday we thought about prayer as relationship. We learned that we choose our name for God by what he means to us. In Jesus' wisdom, he knew that our nature is such that when we are with others, with the exception of those we love and trust most, we are tempted to pretend, to be less than honest, to play to our audience. When we are alone, we don't need to pretend. So we must go further to say that not only do we name God as he is for us, we name ourselves as we are before him.

The American Baptist Evangelism Team has suggested a model, dealing with personal decision for Jesus Christ, which also assists us in naming ourselves as we are before God.



The person is the dotted line at the intersection of the private/group/institutional arenas. Personal decision for Jesus Christ, therefore, means accepting him into the totality of one's private life, into one's groups (particularly family), and into one's institutional roles (as citizen or worker).

Our relationship to God is tremendously affected by the institutional and group realities of our existence. What we are as a citizen or worker, what we are as mother or father, son or daughter, what we are as a member of a political party or civic club are powerful dimensions of the "self" we are as we come to God in prayer.

God cannot and does not relate to what we are not. I don't mean that God can't break in upon our lives in any fashion, and at any time he chooses. He does cut through our falseness, our counterfeit personalities, to bring us to judgment about our deception. Yet, a living prayer relationship with God comes when we dare to "level" with God. When someone will not allow you beyond the very superficial levels of his or her life, there is little or nothing you can say. You only make "small talk." Likewise, when we present only a fictitious personality to God, when we pretend something we aren't, there is no real *presence* with which God can be truly present.

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

You have "closed the door" now. God wants to be present with the real you. Before God now, in his presence, look at yourself, and name yourself before God. If you are like me, you have many names. You are "legion": giant/weakling, hero/coward, laughter/cryer, reconciler/fighter, lover/hater, listener/talker, self-giving/selfish, sinner/saint. All the dimensions of the inner self are expressed in the private, group, and institutional arenas.

Spend some time *naming* yourself alone before God. Record five or six expressions of the "legion" you are.

Many of these expressions of ourselves are determined by the institutional, group, and private sectors of our living. Review the names you have given yourself and note by each the sector (institution, group, private) which influences this expression of your being.

2

In dedicating ourselves to God, he accepts us as we are. We need, therefore, to give our total selves to him—the good and the not-so-good, the positive and the negative.

Pray something like this as you close this period.

God, thou art *my* God. Thank you for this time alone. I would like to have your presence as vivid as this throughout the whole day. Help me to know that you are with me, in whatever arena I find myself, even as I am, and that your strength can be my strength. And God bless (write in first names of those with whom you are sharing this adventure):

May they be strengthened by your Presence.
Amen.

During the day

Create some minutes within your routine today to recall this time when you were in solitude with God.

DAY TWO

"When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites."

Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one was a Pharisee, the other was a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed like this with himself, "O God, I do thank thee that I am not like the rest of mankind, greedy, dishonest, impure, or even like that tax collector over there. I fast twice every week; I give away a tenth part of all my income." But the tax collector stood in a distant corner, scarcely daring to look up to Heaven, and with a gesture of despair, said, "God, have mercy on a sinner like me," I assure you that he was the man who went home justified in God's sight, rather than the other one.

(Luke 18:10-14, Phillips)

The eminent theologian John Cobb confessed:

I am driven back to this concern with prayer because *I find no other way to achieve adequate self-knowledge, self-control, and stability of commitment.* In the ordinary course of events I am not moved to careful and honest self-analysis. When I engage in self-examination in the presence of other persons, I cannot free myself from concern as to what they think of me or of what the consequences of my confession may be. When I seek professional help, I find that the categories through which I am helped to self-understanding deal only with limited aspects of my total being. In church when I join with others in confessing my sins, those sins are too generally stated to force me to more careful self-awareness. It is when I am alone that I can bring all these things together and go beyond them. But if I think of myself as simply alone, I do not find myself drawn to such painful analysis. As long as I am getting by with others, why should I judge myself more exactly than they do? It is only when I think of myself as being alone before God that traditional Christian self-examination, confession, and repentance make sense to me.⁸

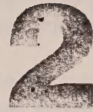
Jesus taught us: "When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; they love to say their prayers standing up in synagogue and at the street-corners for everyone to see them. I tell you this: they have their reward already. But when you pray, go into a room by yourself, shut the door, and pray to your Father who is there in the secret place; and your Father who sees what is secret will reward you" (Matthew 6:5-6, NEB).

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

Let's go further with the process we started yesterday—naming ourselves before God. Here is a framework for it.

Self-examination. Take a long, hard look at yourself. Don't pass over this quickly. Go beneath the surface. Spend five or ten minutes naming yourself as you are before God. Make some notes for only you to see.

Confession. Out of your self-examination did you become aware of some action or attitude, some hurtful relationship, some estrangement that you need to confess? In accepting ourselves, we do not accept indiscriminately those things which hinder our relationship with God and others. Confession is the way we clarify the vision of who we are before God by acknowledging our destructive habits and seeking the "realignment" of our energies in more constructive directions. In accepting us, God takes even our sin and, through confession, renders the misaligned intention behind it useful and productive! Write your confession here in a simple way.



Repentance. Repentance is the next step beyond confession. Some people confess without repentance. To repent is to be genuinely sorry for and pained by your sin. It is sincerely to turn away from it to seek a new life. If you do *not* feel genuinely sorry for or pained by your sin, ask God at this time to sensitize you to what you believe to be your sin, guiding you into constructive ways of dealing with it. You may later come to feel genuine repentance, or you may come to find what you believed was sin was really only a self-assigned guilt. Either way, it is a serious matter which needs to be revealed and abandoned under God's forgiving acceptance. When you are ready to take this step of repentance, make this prayer your own.

Father, I repent of _____

I leave this behind and accept your forgiveness. Set me free and enable me to lead a new life. Amen.

Read this Scripture promise aloud. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9, RSV).

Thank God for his forgiving love, accept his forgiveness, and go in the freedom of it.

During the day

Be attentive to your relationships with others today. See if you can "catch" yourself playing games with them, pretending to be something you aren't. When you catch yourself in pretense, quietly confess this to God, and ask him to help you be yourself.

DAY THREE

"When you pray don't rattle off long prayers. . . ."

And then, when you pray, don't be like the play-actors. They love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at street-corners so that people may see them at it. Believe me, they have had all the reward they are going to get. But when you pray, go into your own room, shut your door and pray to your Father privately. Your Father who sees all private things will reward you. And when you pray don't rattle off long prayers like the pagans who think they will be heard because they use so many words. Don't be like them. After all, God, who is your Father, knows your needs before you ask him.

(Matthew 6:5-8, Phillips)

Thomas Moore saw seclusion as a kind of spiritual greenroom to which actors returned in their hired garments from the heat and public display

of the stage. Jesus urged us not to be "like the play-actors" who pray to impress others. Prayer is relationship. It is primarily communication between one person and God.

Two days ago we made the distinction between simply being alone, and being alone *with God*. We are not necessarily better persons when we are alone, only more genuine perhaps. The result of being alone and naming ourselves before God is that we can level about ourselves with God and with others. Solitude is thus preparation for more honest relationship and more deliberate participation with others and the world. So Jesus insists that our growth in prayer, our growth in relationship to the Father, is dependent upon that time alone with him.

In our aloneness with God, Jesus says, "Don't rattle off long prayers like the pagans who think they will be heard because they use so many words." In the world that Jesus knew, the "gods" of the people were remote, unpredictable, far removed from the affairs of earth. Prayer for the most part, in much of the religious practice of that day, was the effort on the part of an individual to win attention. So one made a lot of noise, rattled on and on. Such is not necessary; in fact, it's repulsive to God, said Jesus. God is near—as near as breathing. He hears our longings even before we put them into words. He "knows your needs before you ask him."

This does not mean that Jesus was against using words in prayer. Nor was he against asking God to meet our needs. On many occasions he poured his longings out to God and petitioned God in specific terms. Here he is making the important point that *it is not God who has removed himself from us, but we who have removed ourselves from him*.

The nearness of God, if we have the grace to grasp it, will transform our praying and our living. His nearness makes all conversation with him intimate.

That means prayer can be a renewing and strengthening experience. When we are honest, most of us will admit that we are not nearly as strong as we sometimes think we are and often pretend to be. A word of ridicule, the turning away of a friend, an unexpected illness, even minor failures, not to mention *big* failures and tragic happenings shatter our confidence. Even as practicing Christians this happens. We think our confidence in God is great enough to keep us strong in faith and commitment, but these threats to our security explode the thought that we are mature in our faith.

So, we come to God regularly, not to "rattle off long prayers," but to spend time in reflection, simply to be alone with him and to gain perspective for living.

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

1. Look back over the past week. Have there been times when your confidence was shattered? Were there times when you realized that you were not as strong as you pretended to be? Did you share that experience with anyone? Did you deliberately share it with God?

2. Do you know yourself as accepted as you are, rather than through the

actions you perform or the masks you wear? Name three persons who accept you as *you really are*.

2

3. When the levels of human support fail, do you believe that God does actually sustain you, that he does provide strength? Recall two experiences when you felt God's strength vividly in your life. Record those experiences briefly here.

Here is a great promise upon which we can depend.

They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.

(Isaiah 40:31, RSV)

In my prayer life I find it very meaningful to memorize such beautiful passages. You may also find such a practice meaningful. If so, memorize this verse, or concentrate on it as you deliberately wait in silence for a few minutes for God to give you perspective and strength for the day ahead.

During the day

Think now of the most difficult situation you might encounter today. It may be a task to perform, a personal encounter you anticipate, a decision you must make. Say *aloud* now, "God will be with me in that situation. No matter what happens, he is going to sustain me." When you approach that situation, remind yourself of this fact and remember the promise of the verse upon which you have been meditating: "They that wait upon the Lord. . . ." (This verse is printed on page 137. You may wish to clip it and carry it with you so that you may refer to it often.)

DAY FOUR

"When you pray . . . your Father who sees what is secret will reward you."

Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel,

"My way is hid from the Lord, and my right
is disregarded by God"?

Have you not known? Have you not heard?

The Lord is the everlasting God, the
creator of the ends of the earth.

He does not faint or grow weary, his under-
standing is unsearchable.

He gives power to the faint, and to him who has
no might he increases strength.

Even youths shall faint and be weary, and
young men shall fall exhausted;

but they who wait for the Lord shall renew
their strength,

they shall mount up with wings like eagles,

they shall run and not be weary,

they shall walk and not faint.

(Isaiah 40:27-31, RSV)

Did you carry that promise with you yesterday? What about your most difficult situation? Did you feel any differently going through it, and after it was over? Spend a minute or two thinking about whether spending time alone with God prior to such an experience makes any difference.

Jesus said, "When you pray . . . shut your door and pray to your Father privately. Your Father who sees all private things will reward you." To be alone with God is necessary because, as we considered yesterday, we do need strength that is not our own. Our own, and other human support, is not enough. When we fail, when we don't make it or are turned off by others, we need to know that there is *Another* who can survive humiliation and failure and can help us survive.

In your recording yesterday, you listed two experiences when you felt God's strength vividly in your life. The truth is, there have been many experiences when such strength was not vivid. Isn't it true that the degree that we feel his presence and power in the daily affairs of life is dependent upon the degree that we share with him *alone* in our "private room" or in the private company of our prayer group or partner?

As we grow in our prayer life, we will come to experience more and more what Jesus meant when he said that the Father "will reward you." Certainly we realize that we do not pray in order to be rewarded. We also realize that God does not "play favorites" and reward the righteous while abandoning the lost. In fact, the story of Job tells us that often the righteous fare much worse than the sinners. We learn the same from the cross! Perhaps we will be better off to consider the "rewards" of prayer as the natural *consequences* of praying. Just as every other act has its consequences, so does the act of prayer. So plant this fact firmly in your mind and heart: *The God with whom we can communicate is capable of answering our prayers.*

The writer to the Hebrews encourages us here: "Whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him" (Hebrews 11:6, RSV).

At this early stage of our journey in prayer, three "consequences" need to be acknowledged and emphasized.

2

1. The consequence ("reward") of *God's presence*. God is always present, but the end of all praying is to know the presence of God within our lives. All sorts of consequences flow from this greatest of all gifts of God.
2. The consequence ("reward") of *power*. Our emphasis yesterday was on this fact: God makes available to us a power not our own.
3. The consequence ("reward") of *guidance*. Prayer, being alone with God, opens our lives to the guidance of God. By its very nature, prayer encourages a *receptive mood*.

François Fénelon, one of the spiritual giants of all centuries, has written a prayer that will assist you in waiting in your secret place for the God who will reward you openly.

Lord, I know not what I ought to ask of Thee; Thou only knowest what I need; Thou lovest me better than I know how to love myself. O Father! give to Thy child that which he himself knows not how to ask. I dare not ask either for crosses or consolations: I simply present myself before Thee, I open my heart to Thee. Behold my needs which I know not myself; see and do according to Thy tender mercy. Smite, or heal; depress me, or raise me up: I adore all Thy purposes without knowing them; I am silent; I offer myself in sacrifice: I yield myself to Thee; I would have no other desire than to accomplish Thy will. Teach me to pray. Pray Thyself in me. Amen.*

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

Fénelon's prayer is over two hundred years old. The language may be clumsy for you, but the "heart" of prayer is there. Go back over the prayer, slowly and deliberately. Then try to make it your own by rewriting it in your own words in this space.

During the day

Dwell on this verse; embed the promise in your mind. "Whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him." This verse is printed on page 137. If you have not memorized it, you may wish to clip it and carry it with you today as a reminder that the consequences of your prayer relationship with God are his *presence*, his *power*, and his *guidance*.

DAY FIVE*"Ask and it will be given you. . . ."*

Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

(Matthew 7:7-8, RSV)

Or what man of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

(Matthew 7:9-11, RSV)

There is no more expansive declaration about prayer than this word confronting us in the Gospel of Matthew. Nothing could have been bolder. All the resources of God himself are available to his children who will enter into a praying relationship with him. Since this is such an extravagant promise, stop now and immerse yourself in verses seven and eight printed above. To memorize these verses will be meaningful to many.

Those who have barely entered the door of Christ's "school of prayer" may grab hold of this promise and begin to besiege the Father with all sorts of requests. That's OK, provided we don't reduce God to some sort of cosmic Santa Claus who is at the beck and call of selfish children. I personally believe that we should talk to God about anything we *feel* is important to us. I believe we should petition God for any gift we *think* we need. Anything that is important to us is important to God. Talking to God about any and everything helps us in finding our way to a life of prayer.

The important thing is that we keep on talking with him, keep on bringing our desires and longings to him until we are clear in our own thinking about our needs. God does not grant us our "wish-list"; he does meet our needs and fulfill our longings.

The power of the promise, "Ask, and it will be given you," lies in the loving relationship between us as children and God as our Father. When we live in that relationship we learn the spirit of the Father, we come to know his will, we act as a part of the "family" (the kingdom), we seek and find. So Jesus added that second word: "What man of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" (Matthew 7:9-11, RSV).

We need to get firmly in our minds now the truly expansive power available through a prayer-relationship with God. As we grow in the relationship, we will understand the conditions and boundaries which guide our use of God's power (that is, we can't seek to use this prayer power in ways God himself wouldn't use it). We will then begin to comprehend the *wisdom* of God in what appears to be unanswered prayer.

Here's what the gospel challenges us to recognize: Don't underestimate the power of God that comes to us through prayer. Don't set arbitrary limits on God. Don't box God into the confines of your present knowledge and imagination. Above all LET GOD BE GOD! Let God determine where he is bounded (for example, he has set some boundaries in making you a free creature, capable of acting for or against him). Remember, "how

much more (than we can comprehend with our human experience and reasoning) will the Father give good things to them who ask him!"

The big meaning here is that too often we add more limits to prayer than God does. God's answers to prayer are always better than our asking. He is always more ready to hear than we are to pray.

2

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

What are the three boldest requests you ever made to God? Record them here.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

Look back at those requests and ask yourself these questions about them.

Did you really believe that your requests would be granted?

Were they?

Were these bold requests consistent with what you believe God would want for you?

What happened in your life as a result of your having received, or not having received, your requests?

Stay with this examination of your bold prayer requests for five or ten minutes.

Now, list the three boldest requests you would like to make of God today. You don't have to share these with anyone. They are your private property. Be honest and be free.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

In closing, pray a prayer like this: "Lord, I'm trying to believe your great promise. I don't know all that it means, and how it can operate in my life. But I believe in you and that your will for me is good. Help me to begin to accept for myself, this very moment, all that you are seeking to give me. Amen."

During the day

You may have memorized the extravagant promise of Jesus recorded in Matthew 7:7-8. Take it with you during the day. (It is printed on page 137 for you to clip and carry with you.) Repeat it often. Call it to mind especially when you may be confronted with difficulty and a need to pray.

DAY SIX

"If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed. . . ."

If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there," and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.

(Matthew 17:20, RSV)

Both Mark (11:23) and Luke (17:5-6) record a similar saying of Jesus about "faith as a grain of mustard seed. . . ." This word is as expansive and as extravagant as the one we considered yesterday: "Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened."

Obviously, Jesus is emphasizing *faith*. Faith is one of the chief elements required to mobilize the answer to our prayers. The New Testament is filled with this emphasis of Jesus.

Your faith has made you well.

(Matthew 9:22, RSV)

O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.

(Matthew 15:28, RSV)

Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.

(Mark 6:34, RSV)

Go your way; your faith has made you well. And immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way.

(Mark 10:52, RSV)

And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

(Luke 7:50, RSV)

On one occasion we hear the disciples asking Jesus why their prayers had been ineffective, and Jesus said plainly, "Because of your lack of faith" (Matthew 17:20). He attributed the failure of his power in his own country to the people's unbelief (Matthew 13:58). Here is a rather startling thought to consider: *Jesus put emphasis upon our faith as the condition of appropriating God's love and power. That love and power is always there, unconditionally, but faith receives it and puts it to work.*

Here is that emphasis in its boldest expression. "If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you." Concede, if you wish, that Jesus was speaking poetically as he often did, and that the moving of a mountain was not to be taken literally. Even so, the truth is there. I like the way Lewis MacLachlan put it.

If we understand the mountains to be mountains of difficulty or of temptation, or barriers to liberty, this striking figure of speech must be allowed its due significance. At the least Jesus is saying that very great hindrances can be removed by faith, that faith is a power that can take up quite insurmountable obstacles and lift them from our path, that it can change the whole landscape for us, that it can make possible what looks impossible. If this is a metaphor it is a big metaphor, and must have a big meaning.⁵

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

We need to remember, as we stated yesterday, that too often we impose more limits on prayer than God does. God's answers to prayer are always better than our asking. He is always more ready to hear than we are to pray.

The bold promise of Jesus considered yesterday, along with this equally bold affirmation today, must be considered in the context of the total message of Jesus concerning our relationship to God. To be in a relationship of faith that results in answered prayer is to be willing to entrust ourselves to him, to give ourselves to his will for our lives, to put ourselves in his care, to follow his guidance in all the affairs of our lives.

When this kind of trusting faith is the soil out of which our praying grows, mountains *will* be moved. In light of this understanding of faith, look again at the two sets of bold requests you have made—those of the past, and those you recorded yesterday. Is there a difference in the two lists? How did the requests on your first list fit into your ongoing trusting commitment to God? What about the second list, the boldest requests you are making of God in the present? Do they fit into a trusting relationship and commitment to God?

When you have thought about these last questions for a few minutes, write a brief prayer expressing where you are right now in relation to God. Ask him to make you bolder in your trusting him, and in your prayers.

During the day

Since praying and trusting God are inseparable, be especially attentive to how you relate your life to God today. Are you going it alone? Are you calling on God just in times of desperation? Are you worrying about things that you should commit to God? Are you making decisions without thought of his will? Especially ask these questions in relation to your *group* and *institutional* roles which you examined on day one of this week.

DAY SEVEN

"If two of you shall agree. . ."

Prayer is one of the primary channels through which the power of God is set loose in the world and in our individual lives. Jesus was bold in his affirmation of the unlimited possibilities that are ours through faith. "Hopefully," our minds are expanding to claim the promises he offered.

Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

(Matthew 7:7, RSV)

If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there," and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.

(Matthew 17:20, RSV)

Of course, we can't get our minds around such expansive promises in a short time. What excitement will be added to our praying when we pray even out of a *longing* to appropriate this expansive faith.

So, while your mind is yet staggered by these promises, here is still more good news from Jesus:

If two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

(Matthew 18:19-20, RSV)

2

Here is a dimension of prayer that we have not yet considered in this adventure: *praying with others*. Jesus was insistent that we find solitude and be alone with God. Here he is saying that the mind and will of God come to us when we pray with others.

"If two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven." Doesn't that boggle your mind? The implication here that we need to concentrate upon is *the focus that can come to our praying when we share with another or with a group*. Many times when we pray alone, it is difficult to sift our selfish desires from our real needs, difficult to keep clear our seeking the will of God rather than our own wills. Our overwhelming desires need to be examined, even somewhat suspiciously, lest they conflict with the fundamental desires of the heart. It is only the satisfaction of the deepest desires of the human heart which can bring fulfillment.

So we pray with another or a group, to test ourselves as it were, to get help in sifting through and sorting out the longings and desires that clamor for satisfaction and fulfillment.

Are any of these needs, longings, or desires so deep, so important, maybe even so desperate, that you would like to find a prayer partner to "agree" with you in making specific petitions to God?

Who will that partner be? If your spouse is sharing this adventure, he or she should be your partner. If your spouse is not sharing this adventure, you probably will want to find someone who is. If you are not related to a group in this adventure, find a trusted person: pastor, wife, husband, or friend. Share with that person this bold promise of Christ, and how you are seeking to find guidance in your praying. Be confident that Christ will honor the promise to be present with you, and that God will answer your prayer.

Right now, pray for guidance in selecting that person. When you have decided (and you don't have to decide right now), make plans to be with that person as soon as possible in order to share this prayer experience. When that happens, come back to this space and record your feelings.

During the day

Each day many of us have brief meetings with persons with whom we can share what is going on in our lives. Today, when you encounter such a person, tell him or her about this adventure in prayer. Share this intriguing promise of Jesus: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Ask them what this means to them, if they believe it, and how it could affect your lives together.

If you do not meet with such a person with whom you can be that specific, perhaps you will find someone with whom you can share something like this: "John/Jane, I'm doing an experiment in prayer. . . ." Tell them something about it, then ask something like: "What do you think about prayer? Have you had any experience that would be helpful to me?" Let the conversation go where it will without it being an embarrassment to, or pressure upon, anyone.

GROUP MEETING FOR WEEK TWO

Needs for group work: one
3 x 5 card for each person in
the group.

INTRODUCTION

Participation in a group such as this is a covenant relationship. You will profit most as you keep the daily discipline of the twenty to thirty minute period, and as you faithfully attend these weekly meetings. Do not feel guilty if you have to miss a day or be discouraged even if you are not able to give the full twenty to thirty minutes in daily discipline. Don't hesitate sharing that with the group. We may learn something about ourselves as we share. We may discover, for instance, that we are unconsciously afraid of spending that daily time "alone with God" because of what he may reveal to us or require of us.

A lot of our growth hinges upon our group participation, so share as openly and honestly as you can. Listen to what persons are saying. Sometimes there is meaning beyond the surface of their words which you may pick up if you are really attentive.

Being sensitive in this fashion is crucial. Responding immediately to the feelings we pick up is also crucial. Sometimes it is important for the group to focus its entire attention upon a particular individual. If some need or concern is expressed, it may be appropriate for the leader to ask the group to enter into a brief period of special prayer for the person or concerns revealed. Participants should not always depend upon the leader for this kind of sensitivity. The leader may miss it. Even if you aren't the leader, don't hesitate to ask the group to join you in special prayer. This praying may be silent, or some person may wish to lead the group in prayer.

Remember, you have a contribution to make to the group. What you consider trivial or unimportant may be just what another person needs to hear. We are not seeking to be profound, but simply to share our experience.

SHARING TOGETHER

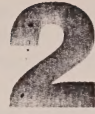
1. Again, you may wish to begin your time together by each person sharing the most meaningful day in this week's adventure.

2. Now share the most difficult day and why.

3. On day three you were asked to recall two experiences when you were keenly aware of God's strength in your life. Let each person share one of those experiences with the group.

4. Does it make any difference that you are spending time alone with God? What difference? Some persons in the group may have anticipated a difficult experience and prepared for that experience by being alone with God. If so, let them share that with the group.

5. On days one and two of this week you focused on "naming" yourself before God. Did you find any major difference between what you are in the three different arenas of your life: private, group, institutional? Discuss how the practice of prayer may make you "one," and how wrestling with principalities and powers in your inner self, alone with God, may equip you to be a responsible person in all the arenas of your life.



6. On day four you centered on the consequences ("rewards") of prayer: presence, power, guidance. Let each person share a fresh insight about the meaning of prayer received from this emphasis.

7. You were asked to tell some person about this prayer adventure. Let persons share the result of that experience with the group.

PRAYING TOGETHER

On day two of this week you were asked to name each person in your group in prayer. An important part of this six-week group adventure is the members praying for each other daily. During these sharing sessions, you may wish to make some notes that will help you recall specific concerns related to each individual. These notes will assist you in praying for these concerns in a focused way.

1. In his "faith as a grain of mustard seed" affirmation, Jesus put emphasis upon our faith as the condition of appropriating God's love and power (day five). That love and power is always there, unconditionally, but faith receives it and puts it to work.

- a. Reread Lewis MacLachlan's commentary on this passage (page 39). Let each person in the group now record on a 3x5 card the "mountain" with which he/she is struggling. Note this clearly enough that the group may know what the "mountain" is, without naming yourself.
- b. When all have finished recording, the leader will collect the cards, shuffle them, and then give them back to each person.
- c. Let each person read the card he/she now has, and pray silently for the removal of that "mountain."
- d. Now let each person read aloud what is recorded on the card, the group pausing in quiet prayer after each reading.

2. Now stand and join hands in a circle. Let the leader say something like this: "All of us face 'mountains'. We may not know what each other's 'mountain' is. But we know that faith moves mountains. We know that where two or three are gathered in his name, he is in the midst of us; and that if we agree together about anything we ask, it will be done by our Father.

"Let us then agree to two things: One, that each one of us will have the faith which will receive and put God's love and power to work. Two, that each one of our mountains will be removed, or overcome, or that the mountain may actually become a *redemptive* part of our lives, making for a beautiful landscape." The leader may then offer a brief verbal prayer to close the meeting.

A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT

As you begin this third week of your journey here are some thoughts to keep in mind.

Discipline is an important dimension of life, not slavish rigidity, but an ordering of life that enables you to be the master of your circumstances, rather than controlled by them. For most people, a designated time of prayer is essential for building a life of prayer.

If you have not yet established a regular time for your "prayer period," try to find the *right* time for you this week. Experiment. In the morning, after work, during the lunch hour, before retiring—find the time that seems best for you.

If you discover that you can't cover all the material and exercises given for a day, don't berate yourself. Get what you can out of what you do. There is no point in rushing over three or four steps or principles, if you cannot or will not think deeply. Pray seriously about them one by one.

Don't hesitate to make decisions and resolves, but don't condemn yourself when you fail. God is patient, and he wants us to be patient with ourselves.

Intellectual assent to a great principle or possibility is important, but it does us little good until we act upon it—until we say yes in our minds.

Basic Ingredients of Prayer and Discovering Your Pattern

4

DAY ONE

Personal perspective through praise.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.
(Matthew 6:13, KJV)

Luke did not include this closing doxology in his record of the prayer Jesus taught his disciples. Scholars believe that very early in its life the church added this doxology as a kind of liturgical response to the original prayer. It was so much in keeping with the spirit of the prayer that Matthew made it an integral part and, from the beginning, individuals and the church at worship have added this mighty outburst of praise, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

We've been living with this model of Jesus, these directions which he gave us. Hopefully, you will continue to live with it and find ways to make it a part of your daily experience.

During this phase of our adventure, we want to consider some basic ingredients of prayer and discover for ourselves a pattern for praying.

Jesus, and all those who would teach us to pray, include *adoration* and *praise* as a basic ingredient of prayer.

adoration

Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name

praise

For thine is the kingdom, and the
power,
and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Adoration and praise make one movement in prayer. We adore God for what he is; we praise him for what he is doing.

O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge
of God! How unsearchable are his judgments
and how inscrutable his ways!

"For who has known the mind of the Lord,
or who has been his counselor?"

"Or who has given a gift to him
that he might be repaid?"

For from him and through him and to him are all
things. To him be glory for ever. Amen.

(Romans 11:33-35, RSV)

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There is always a dimension of mystery about prayer. Creature meets Creator. Praise and adoration is the movement of "taking off our shoes" as we stand on "holy ground."

The Psalms are excellent resources for praise and adoration. Many people find it helpful to read a psalm or two each day, as an act of praise and adoration at the beginning of the period of private prayer.

Others commit certain psalms or parts of psalms to memory and use these over and over again in adoring and praising God. Here are some favorites.

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the lands!
Serve the Lord with gladness!
Come into his presence with singing!

Know that the Lord is God!
It is he that made us, and we are his;
We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise!
Give thanks to him, bless his name!

For the Lord is good;
his steadfast love endures for ever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.
(Psalm 100, RSV)

Bless the Lord, O my soul;
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name!

Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits,
who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the Pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
who satisfies you with good as long as you live
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
(Psalm 103:1-5, RSV)

O Lord, our Lord,
how majestic is thy name in all the earth!

When I look at thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,
the moon and the stars which thou hast established;
what is man that thou art mindful of him,
and the son of man that thou dost care for him?
Yet thou hast made him a little less than God,
and dost crown him with glory and honor.

O Lord, our Lord,
how majestic is thy name in all the earth!
(Psalm 8:1, 3-5, 9, RSV)

There is power in praise. When we focus on the greatness, love, mercy, care, presence, and power of God, we are lifted above our own limitations. Our minds are directed to a source of strength beyond ourselves. We gain perspective for our own time and circumstances. I find, and many others have shared the same experience, that problems are seen in a different light, perplexities untangle, confusion often vanishes. A power unsought

and unasked for comes when, in my praying, I can give attention to adoration and praise. I don't know how this works, but it does work.

Von Hugel once declared, "Any religion that ignores the adoration of God is like a triangle with one side left out."⁷ There is an ancient Hindu prayer that says only, "Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful." When we think of God's activity in our lives, when we remember what he has done for us, and for the world, in Jesus Christ, we are moved to adoration and praise: "Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful."

Adoration and praise are mixtures of gratitude, reverence, and awe. *Gratitude*: not only for God's gifts, but for God himself, for his revelation in Jesus Christ, for his power that comes through the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit, for his constancy—always being "there," always for us, always concerned.

Reverence: not a reverence that we ought to feel, but a firsthand feeling of being drawn into his presence, drawn to the pinnacle of our own being, drawn to a feeling of oneness with others because of our oneness with him.

Awe: a feeling of being humble, unable to comprehend the mystery of God's love and grace moving in our lives. The speechless certainty that the coincidences that seem unexplainable have meaning and purpose which makes us recognize them as "God-incidents," events where the ever-present activity of God seems especially awe-invoking. The stirring within that makes us *know* that the sudden bursts of insight, the "instant guidance," the "falling into place" of misplaced and displaced experiences—all this Power beyond us breaking in, Mystery operating in our lives, and we are filled with awe. "What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him?" (The KJV translation renders that phrase, "And the son of man, that thou *visitest* him.")

Gratitude, reverence, awe—like seeing a beautiful mountain rising out of the darkness at daybreak and not wanting to climb it, or photograph it, or talk about it—only to look at it and lose yourself in grandeur; like walking with a friend, talking and sharing deeper and deeper until you are one with each other, then sitting to rest and talking no more, only to be in each other's presence in silence; like sitting on the beach and hearing the torrential rush of the waves as a storm is rising—the waves get higher and higher, and closer and closer, but you are not afraid, only overcome with the power of it all and your inability to calm them or hold them back.

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

Reread the psalms that are printed above. Read them aloud, slowly and deliberately. Then read them a second time with all the exuberance and feeling they evoke. Then sit quietly for three minutes, five if you can, in *gratitude, reverence, and awe*.

After this time of adoration and praise, write two or three sentences that describe what you feel.

During the day

Be sensitive to "God-incidents" today, bursts of insight, "instant guidance," mystery, power breaking in. When you are aware of such, respond to it with this burst of praise, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name!" Get that in your mind now for your instant recall. Take a small piece of paper and a pen with you and make a note of each time you become aware of "God-incidents" today.

4

DAY TWO

Confession for communion and cleansing.

Yesterday you were asked to make notes of your "God-incidents." Transfer these notes to this space now. If you didn't make notes, try to pick them out of your memory and write them here.

Begin a brief prayer of adoration and praise with the words of the psalmist, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name!" Complete the prayer with your own words of adoration and praise as you think about who God is, what he has done, and is doing, particularly how you may have seen him at work yesterday.

Confession is a second basic ingredient in prayer. Through confession we experience cleansing and communion. In the classic book *Cloud of Unknowing*, there is the phrase "a lump of sin." The writer says that we feel that way sometimes—as "a lump of sin." That came home to me vividly recently when I was traveling for two weeks away from my family. I came into New York from a transAtlantic flight, tired, longing for my family, especially for my wife. A rather subtle but direct temptation pre-



sented itself. A stewardess made herself available to me. I confess that my lust level almost got out of hand. I entertained the possibility of responding—only for a moment.

Out of commitment to my wife and family and all that I believe about life and relationship, I acted responsibly and refused the temptation. Yet, that lustful moment stayed with me as a kind of *blur* almost the entire night.

My sleep schedule was in chaos because of the night flight from London, and the change of time. Alone in my hotel, in my wakefulness, I wanted to pray, to be in close communion with God. I didn't seem capable of it, and communion didn't seem possible. After much mental wrestling and anguish, I became aware of the block. I was experiencing a "hangover" from the lustful moment I had experienced earlier. So I was feeling a tremendous sense of estrangement and emptiness. I felt like a "lump of sin."

That estrangement and emptiness was not due to something I'd done—I hadn't acted irresponsibly—but to the way I related to my lustful feelings. I confess that I didn't want to admit I had potentially lustful desires, but there they were—they were a real part of me with which I had to deal. Not wanting to find them, I felt like a "lump of sin."

Earlier in our adventure we worked on naming ourselves before God, sharing our honest selves with him. I practiced that, naming my "lump of sin," confessing it as a real part of me, asking God to help me use the vital energy behind it in more constructive ways. I began to experience relief and ease in my inner being. I began to feel "right" (honest) with God, and communication flowed. Soon I was relieved, uplifted, no longer feeling like a "lump of sin," and before too many minutes I was sleeping soundly. *Communion and cleansing had come through confession.*

The psalmist knew the power of this long ago.

Come and hear, all you who fear God,
and I will tell what he has done for me.
I cried aloud to him,
and he was extolled with my tongue.
If I had cherished iniquity in my heart,
the Lord would not have listened.
But truly God has listened;
he has given heed to the voice of my prayer.
Blessed be God,
because he has not rejected my prayer
or removed his steadfast love from me!
(Psalm 66:16-20, RSV)

Adoration and praise are there. And also confession: "*If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.*"

The loving God to whom we pray wants fellowship with us. Because we know he is good and righteous, our sin prevents intimate communion. The block is on our side, not his. The block is removed by confession. The writer of First John was not laying down a condition to be met, so much as stating a fact that is eternal, when he said, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9, RSV).

The forgiveness of God is ours for the accepting. Confession is a prerequisite, not to God's forgiveness, but to our appropriation (receiving) of his forgiveness. That's the reason confession brings cleansing. We lay



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ourselves out before God. We accept his love and forgiveness and are free and whole again.

Confession opens the door to communion. Sin brings separation, estrangement; forgiveness brings reconciliation, togetherness. Sin, then, is a barrier to communion. Confession removes the barrier. We come to God as we are, receive his forgiveness which makes us feel clean, and enter into communion with him.

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

Sin is not only what we do, it is often what we think and are. It is our separation from God, our failure to live in obedient relationship to him. It is putting our kingdom, rather than his kingdom, first. Sometimes we feel like a "lump of sin," not because of what we have done, but because our inner-being seems out-of-joint, out of relationship with God. We don't feel any oneness. Our lives are fragmented, out of focus.

Where do you feel "out-of-joint" or estranged today? Write your confession here.

The fact that I am a sinner does not keep God from loving me. Communion with God does not depend upon my being without sin. On the contrary, it is dependent upon my acknowledging myself as a *sinner*, accepting that fact within myself, and believing with all my heart that Jesus loves me just as I am, and that his love saves me, *cleanses* me.

When I believe in my heart like this, I feel clean, and I can enter into communion with God, praying something like this:

Lord, I know that you are personal, and that you are close by, but I have not acted accordingly. I am always forgetting that you are an infinitely loving Father, and that your plan is to make me your child—fully, completely, with unimagined benefits only a loving Father gives to his children. I keep forgetting that your uniqueness is not in being all-powerful, but in being all-loving; that you are not primarily someone for me to love, someone by whom I must allow myself to be loved. Help me, Father, to let myself be loved. Amen.

Finish the prayer that you started with your confession above by sharing with God exactly how you feel about accepting his forgiveness and love.

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During the day

What we have been dealing with in this session of our adventure is perhaps the most difficult dimension of our relationship with God. We spend our lives struggling with God's love for us and what we are to do in response to that love. Here it is in a kind of scriptural nutshell.

Dear Friends, let us love one another, because love is from God. Everyone who loves is a child of God and knows God, but the unloving know nothing of God. For God is love; and his love was disclosed to us in this, that he sent his only Son as the remedy for the defilement of our sins. If God thus loved us, dear friends, we in turn are bound to love one another. Though God has never been seen by any man, God himself dwells in us if we love one another; his love is brought to perfection within us.

(1 John 4:7-12, NEB)

Select one person whom you have difficulty loving. During this day see how your communion with God is enhanced by your deliberate effort to love this person as God has loved you.

DAY THREE*Power through petition.*

Many persons who have lived a long life of prayer disparage petition as an unnecessary and almost irreverent attempt to get God to do what we want him to do. Prayer, they say, is primarily putting ourselves into the Father's hands, giving ourselves unreservedly to him, making no request other than for the doing of his will. Prayer is an act of surrender, a willing openness to trust whatever the Father has for us.

Prayer is putting ourselves into the Father's hands, surrendering to him, opening ourselves to receive his gifts. But to say that this leaves no place for petition (making our requests known to God) is to go against one of the most emphatic teachings of Jesus: that we should come to the Father with our desires and ask him to meet our needs. *Ask, knock, seek; give us this day our daily bread; if two of you agree about anything they ask, it will be done for them; how much more will your Father give good things to them who ask him.*

We should not allow prayer to be reduced to the superstition that sees it as a desperate device for getting what we want (usually after all else has failed), or as merely a helpful psychological technique of auto-suggestion. At the same time, we should not ignore the place of petition or supplication in an effective practice of prayer. Obviously, Jesus believed that there was power and meaning in petition and supplication. Paul put this ingredient of prayer into proper perspective in his Letter to the Philippians:

Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 4:6-7, RSV)





Different translations add different emphases.

Have no anxiety, but in everything make your requests known to God in prayer and petition with thanksgiving. Then the peace of God, which is beyond our utmost understanding, will keep guard over your hearts and your thoughts, in Christ Jesus.

(NEB)

Don't worry over anything whatever; tell God every detail of your needs in earnest and thankful prayer, and the peace of God, which transcends human understanding, will keep constant guard over your hearts and minds as they rest in Christ Jesus.

(Phillips)

Examine these different translations. Are there any substantial differences in meaning? What translation best opens up this passage for you? Why? Make some notes here.

The expression of desires is no mean part of Christian worship. In contrast to other systems of prayer which teach the extinction of desire the New Testament encourages the development and discipline of our wants in accordance with the will of God. . . . Our desires are a very important factor in making us what we are, and if bad desires can be our ruin, good desires can be our salvation. Instead of trying to quench desire, we should purify and exalt it, and there is no better way of doing so than to make our requests known unto God. To state clearly what we want in the presence of God is an exercise which cannot be undertaken lightly or thoughtlessly. It is one important part of the discipline of prayer."

After making the above statement, MacLachlan warned us in this fashion:

- a. Beware of the weak desire of one who never wants anything enough to be sure of getting it, or of enjoying it when gotten.
- b. Beware, on the other hand, one very insistent and pressing desire whose satisfaction can retard the fulfillment of a higher purpose.
- c. Worst of all, and one of the chief hindrances to effectual prayer, is the divided desire. A double-minded person is unstable in all his or her ways.

Putting those warnings in a positive fashion, we would say—

- a. we must know what we want;
- b. we must be sure that we want it;
- c. we must not at the same time be asking for things that are contradictory to each other.

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

What were the last two or three specific petitions you made to God in prayer? Or, what petitions are you bringing to him today? Write those here.

Test these petitions against the warnings sounded above. Do you know what you want? Are you sure that you want them? Are any of these requests in conflict with each other? Are they consistent with what you believe God wants, and with the way he works in the world?

Having tested yourself, bring your petitions to God now. Pray specifically, verbalizing clearly each request, believing that what you ask "in his name" will be answered. Then ask God to help you identify that answer when it appears, however it appears.

During the day

Yesterday we suggested that during the day you should see how your communion with God is enhanced by your deliberate effort to love others as he has loved you. Hopefully, you practiced that and found meaning in it. I want you to continue it today. Add this dimension to it: More often than not, God answers your prayers through others, and he answers others' prayers through you. As you express care in your relationships today, see your *loving* as an answer to the prayers of the person you are showing love. In doing this you enter into a deliberate prayer partnership with God; *you practice living prayer*. See if this makes any difference in your relationships.

DAY FOUR

Power through petition.

There is no such thing as an unanswered prayer. Jesus taught us that if we pray believingly, with faith, then God will assuredly respond to our prayer.

This stance of Jesus is psychologically sound. Think about it.

*All desires tend to fulfill themselves if backed
by expectation.*



*Our deepest desires and habitual thoughts create
and control the conditions in which we live.
We are motivated and energized by our faith,
by our desires, by the aims and goals of our lives.*

4

There is something demonic as well as holy in the dynamic possibilities of our desires. It is true that we usually get that upon which we set our hearts. Therefore, we need to remember always that *success is not in maximizing our self-interest, but in living in interdependence as a part of God's family*. Our petitions then, are focused not upon our self-interest, but upon our deep need for community, and the needs of all humankind.

Because of the inherent power of desire, some people say prayer is merely auto-suggestion. The only thing wrong with that statement is the word *merely*. Prayer may be auto-suggestion, but not *merely* auto-suggestion. And what is wrong with auto-suggestion? Recall the word of Paul to the Philippians which we centered upon yesterday.

Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 4:6-7, RSV)

Paul continued that letter with these words,

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

(Philippians 4:8, RSV)

What we set our minds and hearts upon is likely to come to us. This makes the ingredient of petition in prayer even more important. In prayer, we not only increase our faith, we enlighten it. What we think may be changed and our desires purified as we bring them to God.

If we are truly praying, then our reason for bringing our petitions to God is to gain the assurance of his will and to be directed in his way. Petition functions in our praying to assist us in clarifying and stating our desires in terms of God's will. Whatever we do in prayer, whether adoring, praising, meditating, interceding, we are attempting to communicate with God and reach his will. It is as we achieve God's will in prayer that we can be sure of achieving it in our lives.

The most active and persistent part of our nature is our desires and aspirations. To bring these desires and aspirations to God in prayer and to consecrate them to him is as much God-centered as adoration and meditation.

One of the most common weaknesses of our prayer lives is the vagueness of our focus. We tend to read Scripture or some "devotional" literature, praise God a little, get some "good feelings," and be done with it. Petition saves us from that. It forces us to be specific, to be precise, to clarify our wants and desires, to seek to know our own minds in order that we might make them known to God.

Prayer would become more meaningful to us if we would make our time of prayer a time of knowing our own minds—clarifying and specifying our wants and desires, our hopes and dreams, our problems and perplexi-

ties, our sin and suffering. Then, in petition, request the help of God's ever-present spirit and power.

When I am this serious about petition, I find my petitions changing, certainly modified on presentation to God. "Prayer always changes our prayers." Therefore, if we don't know for what we ought to pray (and most of us don't often know precisely), we should ask for God's guidance in our praying. This is the highest petition.

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

To add the ingredient of petition to our praying necessarily requires that we expect answers. It is futile, even sacrilege, to ask God for something and not expect some response from him. Therefore, it's a good idea to keep a record of our requests and the answers God gives.

Go back to day seven of the first week of your adventure. Look at the *wishes* you were asked to list on that day. What has happened to those desires? Have they been fulfilled? List them here again with a word about what has happened.

Go back now to day five of the second week of your adventure. On that day you listed three bold requests to God. Note those again here with a word about what has happened to those requests.

How important were those petitions to you? You may not have gotten some of the things for which you asked. Is God saying no to you? Or, are the requests still open to be fulfilled? Were you double-minded, making conflicting requests? Think now of what petitions you wish to bring to God. You may want to repeat some of the ones you've listed above, or some new ones. Test them by what we've been saying about petition today and yesterday. Write down the petitions you made yesterday that have not yet been answered. List them and add whatever you wish here.

During the day

You may wish to share your most important petitions with a friend, someone with whom you have prayed before, maybe someone who is sharing



this adventure with you. This is a good way to test your petitions. You can't be vague if you are going to share with another; you have to be clear in order to communicate. A trusted friend will be able to help you see it clearly, to be single-minded. Above all, a petition that is agreed upon by another will have the focus and power of Jesus' promise: "If two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven" (Matthew 18:19, RSV).

DAY FIVE

Intercession: "Turning the question mark into an exclamation point."

When Jesus had said these words, he raised his eyes to Heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son now so that he may bring glory to you, for you have given him authority over all men to give eternal life to all that you have given to him. And this is eternal life, to know you, the only true God, and him whom you have sent—Jesus Christ. . . .

"I am praying to you for them: I am not praying for the world but for the men whom you gave me, for they are yours—everything that is mine is yours and yours mine—and they have done me honour. Now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world and I am returning to you. Holy Father, keep the men you gave me by your power that they may be one, as we are one. . . .

"And now I come to you and I say these things in the world that these men may find my joy completed in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them, for they are no more sons of the world than I am. I am not praying that you will take them out of the world but that you will keep them from the evil one. They are no more the sons of the world than I am—make them holy by the truth; for your word is the truth. I have sent them to the world just as you sent me to the world and I consecrated myself for their sakes that they may be made holy by the truth.

"I am not praying only for these men but for all those who will believe in me through their message, that they may all be one. Just as you, Father, live in me and I live in you, I am asking that they may live in us, and that the world may believe that you did send me. . . . Father, I want those whom you have given me to be with me where I am; I want them to see that glory which you have made mine—for you loved me before the world began."

(John 17:1-3, 9-11, 13-21, 24, Phillips)

Jesus knew that the cross was imminent. Soon he would be "returning to the Father." He did that which was natural, that which was the style of his life and ministry: *He turned his attention to others. Here is his love and hope translated into prayer for his disciples and for all who would be his disciples.*

Father, keep the men you gave me by your power that they may be one . . . may my joy be completed in them . . . I am not praying that you will take them out of the world but that you will keep them from the evil one . . . make them holy . . . I consecrated myself for their sakes . . . I am not praying only for these men but for all those who will believe in me through their message . . . I want those whom you have given me to be with me where I am; I want them to see that glory which you have made mine.

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Jesus prayed for others as simply and naturally as he prayed for himself. It should be no less true with us.

Stop here for a few minutes to think what it must have meant to the disciples two thousand years ago to have Jesus praying for them.

Think what it means that in praying for his disciples, and those who would believe through their message, Jesus' prayer now includes you.

The living Christ is praying for you *now*: "Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25, RSV).

Ponder this: *Jesus' prayers then are affecting you now*. In addition, *Christ intercedes for you now*. What does that do for you? Immerse yourself in that truth for a few minutes.

There is no larger question mark in living prayer than there is about *intercession*. For many this is a great stumbling block to prayer. Despite all the questions and confused understandings, the fact remains: It is the natural mood of living prayer to pray for others as we pray for ourselves. When we are not "hung up" with intellectual problems, we move, almost inevitably, to lifting to God our concern for other persons.

It is not our task in this workbook to deal with the problems and questions surrounding *intercession*. Entire books have been written on the subject. Since this is an adventure, a workbook, the task at hand is to adventure in intercessory prayer. Such an adventure, I am convinced, will change our question mark into an exclamation point.

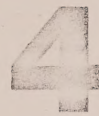
People who practice living prayer can heap witness upon witness of the power of intercession. It is an experiential fact that has been demonstrated over and over again, that if in any community a large number of earnest Christians unite in unselfish prayer for a revival of Christian concern and commitment, that revival will come. Dr. John R. Mott, world Christian leader of another generation, confirmed this in his testimony: "For many years it has been my practice in traveling among the nations to make a study of the sources of spiritual movements which are doing most to vitalize and transform individuals and communities. At times it has been difficult to discover the hidden spring, but invariably where I have had the time and patience to do so, I have found it in an intercessory prayer-life of great reality."⁹

Witness can be heaped upon witness of the "coincidences" that occur when we practice intercession. Archbishop William Temple said, "When I pray, coincidences happen, and when I do not, they don't."¹⁰ Obviously these are not co-incidences, but the realization of God-incidences.

Even though we "see through a glass darkly," and are often confused and baffled, our experience is clear that something creative and powerful happens when we practice intercessory prayer.

Harry Emerson Fosdick puts intercession in its clearest perspective.

No explanation, however reasonable, can do justice to the *experience* of vicarious praying. To feel that, we must turn to life. When a mother prays for her wayward son, no words can make clear the vivid reality of her supplications. Her love pours itself out in insistent demand that her boy must not be lost. She is sure of his value, with which no outward thing is worthy to be compared, and of his possibilities which no sin of his can ever make her doubt. She will not give him up. She follows him through his abandonment down to the gates of death; and if she loses him through death into the



mystery beyond, she still prays on in secret, with intercession which she may not dare to utter, that wherever in the moral universe he may be, God will reclaim him. As one considers such an experience of vicarious praying, he sees that it is not merely resignation to the will of God; it is urgent assertion of a great desire. She does not really think that she is persuading God to be good to her son, for the courage in her prayer is due to her certain faith that God also must wish that boy to be recovered from his sin. *She rather is taking on her heart the same burden that God has on his; is joining her demand with the divine desire. In this system of personal life which makes up the moral universe, she is taking her place alongside God in an urgent, creative outpouring of sacrificial love.*

Now, this mother does not know and cannot know just what she is accomplishing by her prayers. But we know that such mothers save their sons when all others fail. The mystery of prayer's projectile force is great, but the certainty of such prayer's influence, one way or another, in working redemption for needy lives is greater still. It may be, . . . that God has so ordained the laws of human interrelationship that we can help one another not alone by our deeds but also directly by our thoughts, and that earnest prayer may be the exercise of this power in its highest terms. But whether that mother has ever argued out the theory or not, she still prays on. Her intercession is the utterance of her life; it is *love on its knees*.¹¹

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

Examine your experience of praying for others. Has it been a *big* part of your life? How much time have you invested in it? Do you believe that any difference is made by your praying for others? What difference? Make some notes as you reflect upon your experience of intercessory prayer.

What experience have you had that confirms the power of other people praying for you?

Read again, now, Fosdick's word about intercession.

During the day

Go through this day conscious of the fact that Christ's prayers in the past affect you now and that he continually intercedes for you now. Believing that his prayers are powerful in your life, pray for others with whom you come in contact, believing that your prayers are powerful in their lives.

DAY SIX

Intercession: A Ministry of Love

It is the testimony of people who practice living prayer in every age that things happen when we pray that do not happen when we don't pray. People are healed, situations change, conditions are altered, persons find direction, revivals come, even the courses of nations are redirected.

It appears that God has so ordered life and the world that our praying is a vital part of his redemptive plan for individuals and the entire universe. Through intercessory prayer God does something that would not otherwise be done. There are numerous facets to intercessory prayer, some that we have experienced, no doubt many that are yet undiscovered. There is one dimension that is such a part of life that we need to give it attention now in our adventure in living prayer. *Intercessory prayer is a ministry of love and care.*

Consider the possibilities for such a ministry.

1. Intercessory prayer is a way of offering our mind as a channel through which God can reach another mind. This is the most unexplored and uncharted dimension of intercessory prayer. With the great breakthroughs in extrasensory perception and telepathy we may discover this to be God's mightiest instrument in bringing his kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

2. Intercessory prayer opens our minds to hear what else God wants to tell us about the way we can minister to others. When we pray for another person, we are centered on that person as well as on God. God can then speak to us about the needs of that other person, and how we may be instruments of meeting that need.

3. Intercessory prayer becomes the "launching pad" for our service to others. People often say, "Prayer *alone* is not enough." Frank Laubach, the great practitioner of intercession, reminds us that "prayer that seeks to do God's will is not alone. It will be accompanied by any other approach that God may suggest. It will be accompanied by service, by considerations, by kindnesses of every kind."¹²

4. Intercessory prayer becomes the "power base" for our relationships with others. I discovered in a heavy counseling ministry that when I prayed for persons with whom I was counseling, immediately before I saw them, that the counseling experience was far more effective than when I didn't. There was a period in my life when I did not take intercessory prayer seriously. During that time I always felt somewhat "frantic" and "has-sled"—almost always "under pressure" for the next appointment, or too intense in my relationship with the person with whom I was sharing. Then I began to practice intercessory prayer, always reserving time between appointments to pray for the person who was coming, and with whom I would be counseling. It was revolutionary for me. I was more relaxed in my relationships, sharper in my perception, focused in my attention—but more, something happened in the persons for whom I prayed. They were more relaxed, more open and honest in their sharing, more receptive to me and what I had to offer, willing to accept my inability and often unwillingness to give "advice."

Intercessory prayer was the "power base" for my relationships with them. This can be transferred into every area of life. We are empowered to serve others and to serve them with the greatest insight and effectiveness when we pray for those we seek to serve.

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5. Intercessory prayer is the investment of ourselves in God's design for his kingdom among people and nations. Frank Laubach called for a "prayer army" of ten million people who "would start praying until our minds were in perfect harmony with the will of God . . . who would tip the balance and save the world." He called this a "war of amazing kindness." We have yet to see what could happen should such an army arise!

Praying for people will bring you to love them. Loving them will lead you to serve them. Serving them will be the open door through which God can move in to save, heal, and make whole.

The ministry of intercession is very demanding. To be serious about intercession is to be ready to give ourselves for the sake of others. This may be the reason we don't take intercession to heart. Here it is at its deepest level.

On the morrow Moses said to the people, "You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin." So Moses returned to the Lord and said, "Alas, this people have sinned a great sin; they have made for themselves gods of gold. But now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written."

(Exodus 32:30, RSV)

That's about as far as one can go in prayer, isn't it? . . . a willingness to be "blotted out" for others.

We hear Jesus saying such things as:

You are those who have continued with me in my trials; and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. . . . Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren.

(Luke 22:28-32, RSV)

Can't you imagine the depth and intensive prayer commitments Jesus had for Peter (Simon)? Jesus wept over the city,

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!

(Luke 13:34, RSV)

Is there any cause to which we are so committed that it evokes that kind of anguish? Intercessory prayer is not easy. It demands the investment, not only of our prayer energy, but of our total lives. When we pray sincerely and earnestly for others, we become unselfish. The blessing of the other person or situation for which we are praying becomes our dominant desire. This clears a channel through which we move in service, or through which God moves directly. We put our whole selves into other persons and great causes. We ally ourselves with God for the sake of the persons we care about and the purposes we serve.

Our commitment to intercessory prayer is probably not waiting for some explanation of how it works, but for a love and passion great enough to drive us to it.



REFLECTING AND RECORDING

Recall the one occasion (person, situation, experience) in which you invested your most energy in intercessory prayer. List it here.

What was the outcome of that situation? What changes took place in the person or situation for which you were praying? What changes took place in you? Record your answers here.

Have you ever prayed for someone, or some situation, and were led to do something *yourself* in response? Name one or two situations, and what you were led to do.

Is there a person, or persons, or situations about whom or about which you are deeply concerned today? *Deeply concerned?* Name two or three.

Are you concerned enough to pray for these persons or situations daily? If so, this is your prayer list. You may want to put these names on a card or small piece of paper in order to carry them with you, so that you can take them out a number of times during the day to pray for them. Make a commitment to at least remember them in prayer each day for the balance of this adventure in living prayer.

During the day

If you made a list of your prayer concerns, take it with you. See how many times today you will have the opportunity of praying for the persons or situations listed above.

DAY SEVEN

Follow a pattern until you need no pattern.

4

On day one of this phase of our adventure, we talked about the place of adoration and praise in our praying. Perhaps you have memorized one of the sample psalms that was printed there, or some other favorite. If so, repeat it slowly as you begin this period today. If you haven't, read this one slowly, letting the words seep into your whole being.

God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear
though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake
in the heart of the sea;
though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

There is a river whose streams
make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.
God is in the midst of her,
she shall not be moved;
God will help her right early. . . .

"Be still and know that I am God.
I am exalted among the nations,
I am exalted in the earth!"
The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.

(Psalm 46:1-5, 10-11, RSV)

Now, be as still and quiet as you can. Free your mind of any thoughts of what you have to do later today. Become as conscious of God as possible. Believe that he is as near as the air you breathe. Maybe you need to think about some images of God, making affirmations like this:

God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all!
God is love—and he so loved the world that he gave his Son!
He is not far from any one of us, because in him we live and move and have our being.

When you have become as conscious of God as you possibly can, then bring into your consciousness of God the names of the persons or situations which you listed yesterday as deep concerns of prayer. Do only that. Bring each person or situation, one by one, into your consciousness of God. Spend five minutes doing this. You may want to start all over with the psalm above—then the affirmations concerning God—then your consciousness of his presence, then bringing persons and situations into that consciousness. Five minutes now.

The exercise you have just completed is often the way I practice intercessory prayer. Many times we begin to pray for people or situations, asking God to bless, change, intervene, do something that we think he ought to do, without getting *with* God ourselves, without becoming aware of his presence within our lives. Two important ingredients of intercessory prayer, are in the preceding exercise: (a) God-consciousness for ourselves; (b) centered or focused thinking and praying on behalf of other

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persons or situations. These ingredients are necessary for power to become effective in our lives, and through us to others. They are also necessary for us to become clear "receivers" of whatever message God wants to give us about the subject of our praying.

Now, to our main concern today: In developing a life of living prayer most of us *need to follow a pattern of prayer until no pattern is necessary*. Many prayer periods are ineffective because we are unable to stay with them, to center down, or focus. There is no direction in which we are going. Prayer needs direction. This is that creative discipline which we are seeking to cultivate within our natural but sporadic inclinations to pray.

Each person must find his or her own pattern, and that's what practice will do for us. Here are two common patterns, one for morning and one for evening, with which you may experiment until you find a more effective style.

MORNING

It is vitally important that early in the day we give ourselves to God seeking his strength and guidance. Even the busiest can find time for this.

Upon waking, you can turn your thoughts at once to God. Repeat beneath your breath, or even aloud, "This is the day the Lord has made: I will rejoice and be glad in it." Or, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name!" Or, repeat a verse of a hymn or poem that is especially meaningful to you.

Then, when you can settle in your private room to which Jesus told us to go, this scheme suggested by W. E. Sangster, which has been helpful to thousands, may be helpful to you.

Adoration: Think about the greatness of God, the incredibility that he is listening to you and is going to answer. Offer praise to God for who he is. "Hallowed be thy name!"

Thanksgiving: "Count your many blessings, name them one by one—then it will surprise you what the Lord has done." Health, home, love, work, friends, fun, family. Even those who are suffering ill health, or misfortune, can find something for which to express gratitude to God.

Dedication: Even though you have dedicated yourself to God in a whole-life fashion, every day ought to be the occasion to renew that dedication to God.

Guidance: Seek God's guidance for the day. Try to foresee what the day is going to be like, what you are going to be doing, people you will be meeting. Think how things are going to be—each thing, each person—because God is with you. Try to get in touch with that to which God is calling you, not just with how he has used you in the past.

Intercession: Pray for others. A prayer list will help to keep you faithful in this. This is so important that we dare not be casual about it.

Petition: We've considered the place of petition in prayer. It ought not to have a major place, yet Jesus has given us promises

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the United States. It is argued that the study of the history of the United States is essential for a full understanding of the country and its people. The second part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the United States. It is argued that the study of the history of the United States is essential for a full understanding of the country and its people. The third part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the United States. It is argued that the study of the history of the United States is essential for a full understanding of the country and its people.

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that we should accept and upon which we should act. Make your petitions to God in the spirit of wanting to do his will and find his way in your life.

Meditation: It's a good thing to spend a few minutes at the close of your prayer period, thinking about, brooding over some truth or insight or experience, giving your mind to God that hopefully you may think his thoughts after him.

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EVENING

As it is important to begin the day with God, likewise it is to end it. Many people "say" their prayers at night, but there is not too much focus, usually a lot of petition, or general "bless _____ and _____ and _____." Evening prayer can be as focused as morning. The following pattern may be helpful to you.

Adoration: Again focus on God by praising him.

Confession: Review the day, look at your life, make your confession of failure, pretense, exaggeration, lack of love, dishonesty, callousness, or shallowness in relationship. Don't just ask God to forgive your "sins." Be specific as you look at life as you have lived it during one day. Accept God's forgiveness. If there is a chance for restitution, some action necessary for you to be reconciled to someone, make a plan to get at the reconciliation or restitution at the earliest possible time.

Thanksgiving: As you review the day you will find numerous things for which to be grateful. If you are attentive and sensitive to the workings of God, you will be able on many evenings to thank God for answering the prayer you prayed that morning.

Supplication: This is a kind of old-fashioned word that may have little meaning to you. It is like *intercession*. It is intercession and petition combined—a kind of brooding, longing act of remembrance of persons and situations about whom and which you are concerned. Bringing these in love and concern is an offering of them and yourself to God.

(This pattern of evening prayer is easy to remember because the first letters of each movement spell ACTS. The ACTS of evening prayer are Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication.)

Perhaps you will need to adapt these patterns to your own schedule. If, for instance, you spend more time at prayer in the morning, you may wish to include the important dimension of confession at that time, reviewing your actions and responses to others during the preceding day.

Again, remember that no scheme is worth anything unless it helps in making prayer a living experience. Prayer is *alive* when we are experiencing communion with the Father. Devise a plan that "works" for you.

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

If you are doing this exercise in the morning, move through the scheme suggested for morning prayer. Go through each movement in your own way.

If it is evening, go through the movements of evening prayer in your own way.

In this space, record briefly your honest feelings about going through such a guided plan of prayer.

During the day

If you haven't made a prayer list yet, maybe you are ready to do so. Jot down names and situations you want to carry with you in your prayer concern today. Recall them as often as possible.

GROUP MEETING FOR WEEK FOUR

INTRODUCTION

One big failure in much of our praying is the failure to be aware of and sensitive to what is happening as a result of our praying. This failure happens at two levels. One, there are obvious answers to prayer that go unnoticed. Two, we are so intent upon finding the dramatic answers that we miss the subtle, deep changes of heart and mind taking place within us.

To live in friendship and fellowship with God, cooperating with his Spirit, living his life in the world—which is the goal of prayer—requires conscious effort on our part. A primary focus of this effort is the development of our sensitivity. The basic ingredients of prayer which you have been considering this week sharpen our sensitivity.

Sharing with others is also helpful in the development of our sensitivity. We need groups such as this to facilitate our sharing, but we also need to be intentional about sharing with persons who are not a part of our group. Many persons are inspired to pray by the witness of persons who are finding meaning in prayer. Our prayer experience is deepened and expanded as we think seriously enough about it to search out what meaning it actually has for us—and to share that meaning with others.

SHARING TOGETHER

1. As you begin this session, select a person to read a couple of the selections from Psalms recorded for day one of this week; then sing one or two verses of a hymn everyone knows.

2. Let each person in the group share the basic "ingredients" of prayer with which he or she has the most difficulty, and why.

3. On day four of this week you were asked to reflect upon what had happened to some needs, wishes, and requests you had recorded during the first and second weeks of our adventure. Share some meaningful result of that reflection. Was a prayer answered? How? Did you change your mind about a need or a request? Have there been "results" that you failed to note?

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4. Many have had meaningful experiences of being prayed for. If you've had such an experience, share it with the group.

5. On day six the possibilities of intercessory prayer as a ministry of love were considered. What new insight about intercessory prayer came to you? What commitment did you make which you would like to share with the group?

6. Discuss the possibility of a group prayer list for which you will make intercession (as individuals and as a group) during the remainder of this adventure. If you decide to make this list, share your concerns and select no more than three or four of them on your list. (It is important that you consider concerns *outside* as well as within the group.) There is a limit to our capacity of prayer energy. Each week review your list to delete and add according to need and concern.

PRAYING TOGETHER

Most of us know the power of *touch*. A football player slaps the hand of a teammate. A friend places an arm around our shoulder as we stand at the grave of a loved one. A child throws arms around us for a joyous welcome home. Our husband or wife quietly takes our hand, holds it warmly or touches it only fleetingly at a moment in a group when we need reassurance. A handshake or a hug in parting is remembered long after words are forgotten.

Jesus took children on his knees to bless them. He often touched people to heal them. In prayer, also, the human touch is often important. We should not hesitate to hold a person's hand as we pray for him/her. It is a mystery, but somehow power—even the power of God—is transmitted person to person by touch.

Be sensitive in your group, and in your personal relationships, to the possible inherent power of the human touch. There may be occasions in your group, for instance, when you ask persons to allow you to place hands upon them as you pray for them. Miracles have come through groups gathering around a person, laying loving hands upon them, and "lifting" them up in prayer.

1. If you have made a group prayer list, begin this time of praying together by centering-in as a group in prayer for these persons and needs. You may wish to use the exercise suggested in today's section in the workbook as a way of centering-in on these needs.

2. Earlier in your meeting, persons were asked to share the "ingredient" of prayer with which they were having the most difficulty. Also, some may have shared a commitment to a ministry of intercessory prayer. Considering the needs expressed, have a time of special prayer. Close your meeting by standing with your arms around each other in a circle.

- a. In two or three minutes of silence look into the eyes of the persons in your group, reflecting upon what is happening in your life and in the lives of others.
- b. After this time of silence, let each person, in a single word, voice spontaneously what he or she is feeling now (i.e., joy, frustration, hope, need).
- c. Close by singing the first verse of "Blest Be the Tie That Binds" or "They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Love."

Pray Without Ceasing 5

DAY ONE

"Day by day, by day, by day."

In every age, we put our deepest experiences to music. Music is an important part of our worship. When we can't communicate the depth and breadth of our feelings, we set them to music. Hymns (psalms) are rich resources for living prayer.

Millions of people have learned an "old" prayer through a "new" song. The hit tune in *Godspell*, "Day by Day," repeats the words of a prayer by Saint Richard of Chichester, who died in 1255. He prayed:

Thanks be to thee, my Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits and blessings, which thou has given to me, for all the pains and insults which thou hast borne for me. O most merciful Friend, Brother and Redeemer; may I know thee more clearly, love thee more dearly, and follow thee more nearly.

So today we sing it to popular music:

Day by day, O dear Lord, three things I pray:
to see thee more clearly,
love thee more dearly,
follow thee more nearly,
day by day, by day, by day.¹

If you know the tune to this song, stop now and sing it aloud—at least hum it as you think about the meaning of the words. If you don't know the tune, make the prayer your own by praying it aloud.

Now stop and get the words in their modern rendering firmly in your mind.

Paul wrote some advice to the Thessalonians that is good for us today.

Be at peace among yourselves. And we exhort you, brethren, admonish the idlers, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

(1 Thessalonians 5:13-18, RSV)

"Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances. . . ." Quite an order . . . but what a difference it makes in our lives, even to try

Project 1: Introduction

The first part of the project is an introduction to the topic. It covers the basic concepts and definitions of the subject. The second part is a review of the literature. It discusses the work of other researchers in the field. The third part is a description of the methodology used in the study. It explains how the data was collected and analyzed. The fourth part is a presentation of the results. It shows the findings of the study and compares them to the previous work. The fifth part is a discussion of the implications of the results. It considers the broader context of the research and its potential applications. The sixth part is a conclusion. It summarizes the main points of the study and provides a final thought on the topic.

The project is organized into six main sections. The first section is an introduction to the topic. The second section is a review of the literature. The third section is a description of the methodology. The fourth section is a presentation of the results. The fifth section is a discussion of the implications. The sixth section is a conclusion.

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it. The King James Version of that one suggestion is "pray without ceasing."

Obviously, this does not mean that we are to spend our lives in prayer meetings. *It does mean that prayer becomes living prayer when we pray our lives, rather than say our prayers.* Our goal is a life of prayer.

And we don't stumble into such a life of prayer. It comes from the deep desire to see God more clearly, to love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly. That's the purpose of this adventure.

We have deliberately refused to give one definition of prayer, for prayer cannot be defined in a few neat sentences. We heap words upon words, seeking to define this movement of the individual to God, and God to the individual, but something is still missing. At the heart of prayer is communion—the "raising of the mind and heart to God." Whatever techniques or methods or plans we use, the *dynamic* is communion with him. *The goal of prayer is a life of friendship and fellowship with God, co-operation with his Spirit, living his life in the world.* That's what I mean by *living* prayer.

We must be intentional about seeking consciously to relate all of life to God.

How do we get at that? We have already begun. The "during the day" suggestions have been aimed at this. Now we want to spend an entire week deliberately focusing upon the admonition of Paul, to pray *constantly*, or "without ceasing."

I believe that we can consciously relate all of life to God only as we spend some deliberate and focused time with him in a specific period of prayer. For most people, I think this time should be at the *beginning* of the day. Our minds are fresh, work is ahead, the day is new. Life has been "passive" as we have slept, now life is *active*—we need to "huddle" deliberately with God in order to play the game with him in an effective way. I believe that most of us will always need that specific fifteen- to thirty-minute period at some time, when we take Jesus' advice and go into "our secret room" to be alone with God. You've been practicing that for the past four weeks, and I am sure it has made a difference in your life.

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

Turn back to the guides for prayer that were given yesterday. Take the guide that fits your situation now—morning, evening, or your own combination of the two—and pray by that guide. Simply, briefly, in your own words, without trying to be formal, pray by one of those guides. Take your time doing this.

Now try to write out briefly, in this space, the prayer you have just prayed.

During the day

Can you repeat, without referring to the words printed above, the prayer "Day by Day"? If you can't, go back and review it. These words are printed on page 137 for you to take with you into the day. Whenever you are moved to think about it, pray it. You may want to sing it, or hum it, or repeat it beneath your breath.

5

DAY TWO

Let "interruptions" call you to prayer.

We must be intentional about seeking consciously to relate all of life to God.

This requires discipline. Here is a beginning. Pick out some regular "interruptions" in your daily life: stopping for a red traffic light, waiting for an appointment, standing in line at the grocery check-out stand, waiting for the commuter train or bus, the time when the service station attendant is filling your car with gas—a regular "interruption" that is a part of *your* life.

Decide now that during these "interruptions" you are going to pray the "Day by Day" prayer. Get it solidly in your mind now, because you will want to be able to call it to consciousness spontaneously.

Day by day, O dear Lord, three things I pray:
to see thee more clearly,
love thee more dearly,
follow thee more nearly,
day by day, by day, by day.

What you really want to fix firmly in your memory are those three petitions:

to see thee more clearly,
love thee more dearly,
follow thee more nearly.

According to how much time your "interruption" gives you, you can approach it in all sorts of ways. Make ~~the~~ three petitions earnestly:

O Lord, I want to see thee more clearly, love thee more dearly, and follow thee more nearly.

Or, you may want to take them one at a time—in the sequence of your interruptions. Meditate on what it means to see the Lord more clearly. Then at the next interruption, turn your mind to the desire to love Christ more dearly. And next, what would it mean in your life to follow him more nearly? Use the interruptions to pray this prayer so that as you return your attention to your situation, you will be more in touch with God's possibilities for your life in it—your relationship with the service station at-

tendant, the check-out person, even the environment surrounding you as you drive along.

Leave this line of thinking for now, and give your attention to a dimension of prayer taught by Jesus.

He spoke to them in a parable to show that they should keep on praying and never lose heart: "There was once a judge who cared nothing for God or man, and in the same town there was a widow who constantly came before him demanding justice against her opponent. For a long time he refused; but in the end he said to himself, 'True, I care nothing for God or man; but this widow is so great a nuisance that I will see her righted before she wears me out with her persistence.'" The Lord said, "You hear what the unjust judge says; and will not God vindicate his chosen, who cry out to him day and night, while he listens patiently to them? I tell you, he will vindicate them soon enough. But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

(Luke 18:1-8, NEB)

Some of you are fathers, and if your son asks you for some fish would you give him a snake instead, or if he asks you for an egg would you give him a present of a scorpion? So, if you, for all your evil, know how to give good things to your children, how much more likely is it that your Heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!

(Luke 11:11-13, Phillips)

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

Go back and reread the scripture. When you have done so, write anything that comes to your mind in response. Let this be random thinking and writing. Don't try to organize it, or to be systematic. Just write whatever comes to your mind in response to this scripture: words, questions, sentences—anything.

Close your period today by returning to the guide for morning and evening prayer. Use the one that fits your time-situation now, and pray what you wish, following the guide. Spend as much time as is necessary with this.

During the day

What regular interruptions will you experience today—waiting for an appointment, or for the bus, or in a grocery line, or at the gas station? Think about the day ahead. What regular interruptions will you most likely experience? List them here.

Determine now to use these interruptions consciously to relate your life to God—and through him, back to your present situation—by using the “Day by Day” prayer. You may want to review the way you can use it, and the prayer itself.

5

DAY THREE

Let situations call you to prayer.

Go back and read Luke 18:1-8, printed in your workbook for yesterday. Now ask yourself:

1. What are the bare essentials of what is said there? All reading is an interpretation of what is written, but try to find what the scripture wants to say itself; try to hear just what is said and not what you would have it say. Record that here.

2. What does the scripture mean for you? What is Jesus trying to say to you in this passage? Here you will try to give your own interpretation, to discover the significance of these words for your present situation. Write that meaning here.

3. If you decided to act upon the message of this scripture, what would that mean? Would there be any changes in your life? What changes? If you took this word of Jesus as a direct word to you, what would you have to do about it? Write your response here.

Now compare what you have written about the scripture today, and what you wrote in your random response to it yesterday. These are two ways to read the scripture profitably. Both ways can have real meaning to your life.

Throughout this adventure, scripture has been a vital part of our daily experience. This has been deliberate. It is my contention that to have a

vital life of prayer, it is essential to live with the scripture. This is one of the primary ways of discovering God, of communing with him, and of finding his will. In the scripture Christ comes alive to us, and we come to know God through him. We are going to pursue this more next week, but we want to begin the process now by considering this scripture which has to do with our emphasis this week.

This parable of Jesus, "the unjust judge," has a twin parable—"the parable of the friend at midnight" (Luke 11:5-13). Both teach what is called *importunity* or "perseverance in prayer." This perseverance may even mean remaining faithful and continuing to trust until the end of time. "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (Luke 18:8). God is not like the reluctant friend or the unjust judge. God is like a father. The main point of the parables is that there are times in our prayer life when we simply have to keep on praying. The man at midnight was prepared to keep on asking until the friend got out of bed and granted his request. The widow was willing to keep on pleading with the unjust judge until she was vindicated. God is neither like "the friend at midnight" or the "unjust judge," for he does not reluctantly withhold what gifts he could give us. Still, he cannot give all his gifts at all times. Our persistence in prayer is not to "nag" him about our unsettled requests but to ingrain in us our ultimate trust and reliance on God for our future and what is to come.

We are going to come back to this later. For now, see this dimension of prayer as a part of building a life of prayer, of praying without ceasing.

Shift gears now. Here is the truth we are trying to drive home: We must be intentional about seeking consciously to relate all of life to God. Here is another aid in this effort. Let situations call you to prayer.

A hurried shopper jostled a little girl who had just gotten a double-dip of ice cream, and the delicious treat splashed on the floor. My heart went out to the little girl. The busy shopper was gone—didn't even see what had happened. The girl was completely surprised, shocked into a kind of numbness. From the look on her face, I could tell she had spent all her money with nothing to enjoy from it. I surmised that her mother was in some other store of the shopping center.

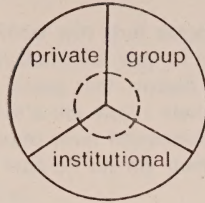
I prayed. Like a flash, it all happened. I called the incident to the attention of the clerk who was busily helping others with their ice cream, laid the money for another cone on the counter, and asked her to offer the little girl a replacement for her lost treat. It was a thrill to see the little girl come out of shock and move from sadness to joy.

Elementary? Yes, but prayer for me is consciously seeking to relate all of life to God. Love was there, and where love is God is.

Close this period by returning to the guide for morning and evening prayer, given on day seven of the preceding week. Use whatever pattern you have devised that fits your time-situation now, and pray what you wish, following your guide. Spend as much time as is necessary with this.

During the day

Continue to pray the "Day by Day" prayer at your interruptions. Today let situations call you to prayer. You get the point of the incident I gave. All sorts of situations develop in your life. Try consciously to relate God to these situations in prayer and action. To be deliberate about this, recall the model which we considered earlier.



5

Situations in each of these arenas of our lives demand our prayer attention.

DAY FOUR

Let persons call you to prayer.

For three days now you have been experimenting with the "Day by Day" prayer. You are being intentional about seeking consciously to relate all of life to God. How is that effort working? What kinds of experiences are jostling your memory to recall this prayer? In your mind now, walk through the past three days. What interruptions are calling you to prayer? List these here.

What situations have called you to prayer? List these and write a brief word about the situation and how you prayed. You may want to try to recall your actual prayer and write it here.

Another "signal" that will assist us in praying without ceasing is this:
Let persons call you to prayer.

It's amazing how experiences that ordinarily would appear mundane take on extraordinary import when we are intentionally seeking consciously to relate all of life to God.

I was sitting in church with my eight-year-old son, Kevin. Obviously bored with the worship that was not pitched at a child's level, he began to play around with what was available to him—the paper on which the order of worship was printed.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw him fold the paper, crease it firmly between his fingers, then run his tongue along the crease. Next he tore the paper along the crease. I was surprised at how evenly it tore—almost as though it had been cut.

I don't know why that struck me with such power, but it did. When did Kevin learn that neat way of tearing paper? Where did he learn it? I can't remember doing that myself for a long time. However, I used to do it. I'm sure that's the way I always did it in school.

I'm not sure what happened in corporate worship for the next few minutes, for I was off on my own, in communion with God. Kevin had called me to prayer.

I prayed for Kevin—he was growing and learning so much, and so fast, and from so many. I prayed for his sisters, Kim and Kerry—at thirteen and eleven, they were in their own unique growth periods. I prayed for my wife and myself. As parents we need to be sensitive to our children, aware of all the influences that play upon their lives. We need all the help we can get from God and our friends to be adequate parents.

Persons call us to deep and meaningful prayer. Other than those with whom we are daily related, and for whom we are constantly praying, there are those brief, one-time encounters that can be occasions for affirmation, even petition and intercession. I believe that the climate of relationships—even the relationship of casual contacts with strangers—can be changed by prayer. This is precisely how using our interruptions for prayer can put us into much stronger relationships with those around us. When we consciously seek to relate a person whom we meet to God, a power is released about which we know little, but which can make a significant difference in that person's life. Aside from that, it will also make a tremendous difference in our lives.

There's a verse of scripture in the Book of Job that describes how crucial our relationship to others really is.

He who withholds kindness from a friend forsakes the fear of the Almighty.
My brethren are as treacherous as a torrent-bed, as freshets that pass away,
which are dark with ice, and where the snow hides itself.
In time of heat they disappear; when it is hot, they vanish from their place.
The caravans turn aside from their course; they go into the waste, and perish.

(Job 6:14-18, RSV)

One translation renders that fourteenth verse:

Friends should be kind to a despairing man, or he will give up faith in the Almighty.

Do you get the meaning of that? How you relate to and care about a person, the way you express your concern—all support that person in his or her faith in God.

We never know who may be despairing. There are countless testimonies of people praying for others. We sometimes discover later that those for whom others were praying were going through great crisis. This can be so even with people we don't know. Often the biggest kindness we can show is in our praying.

Try to overcome the fact that you will never know "the good" that is done by your praying for strangers. Leave that to God, but trust the mystery "that more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." Let persons call you to prayer. Prayer will call you to action.

Then the King will say to those at his right hand, "Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you . . . ; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and

you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?" And the King will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me."

(Matthew 25:34-40, RSV)

5

Close this period today in the same fashion as yesterday, using whatever pattern of prayer is suitable to you. Take as much time as you need.

During the day

You have three "signals" now: interruptions, situations, persons.

Let them all be the sounding gong in your soul which calls you to pray without ceasing today.

DAY FIVE

Attention.

Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian; and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and lo, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, "I will turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt."

When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here am I."

Then he said, "Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

(Exodus 3:1-5, RSV)

I wonder what would have happened to Moses if he had not made the decision to "turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt"? The scripture says that it was after Moses "turned aside to see" that God called to him out of the bush.

Moses was doing his job in an ordinary sort of way. He wasn't in a church, or at his special morning prayer time—just tending the flock of his father-in-law, business as usual. In the midst of that task he suddenly discovered something that he had never seen before, a bush aflame in an unusual way.

This was a unique visitation of God, dramatic, as we think about it. Yet, there must be many "burning bushes" in our daily lives that we don't turn aside and see. Simone Weil, a Frenchwoman who died in 1943 at the age of thirty-three, became a kind of apostle of the spiritual life in France. Through her writings, which were published posthumously, she provided some keen insight about living prayer. Her definition of prayer as *attention* is on target. *Prayer is attention*, "turning aside to see."

One of the greatest enemies, not only of prayer, but of the whole spiritual life is inattention—complacency. Pascal called this “the Gethsemane sleep,” referring to what the disciples did when Jesus asked them to watch with him.

Persons generally approach life in two ways, exercising two impulses: one, to accept and take for granted; two, to look with inquiring wonder. Moses responded to the latter impulse. He made the decision to leave his shepherd task for a moment, to turn aside from leading the sheep, to follow his curiosity and see what was going on. The burning bush caught his attention, and he decided to *attend to what he saw*.

The entire “burning bush” passage is vital to our understanding of prayer as attention—*seeing, but also attending to what we see*. Continuing with verse six, the passage relates:

And he (God) said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Then the Lord said, “I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey. . . . And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring forth my people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt.”

(Exodus 3:6-10, RSV)

Moses tried to argue with God—and prayer may involve that—offering excuses, and begging God to send someone else. But eventually Moses responded and “took his wife and his sons and set them on an ass, and went back to the land of Egypt; and in his hand Moses took the rod of God” (Exodus 4:20, RSV).

Paying attention is listening and responding to God’s call. If Moses had never responded, he would never have been Moses; he would never have fulfilled his destiny.

I wrote of this in *Be Your Whole Self* as a part of the process of “living deliberately.”

It was when Moses *attended* to what he saw that God spoke to him. The height of the mystery is in Moses’ response to this happening. He “hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God” (Exodus 3:6). The root of the word “mystery” is a Greek word meaning literally “to shut one’s mouth.” This is a part of the “tuning in process”—to shut one’s mouth that the Other might speak, to “take off one’s shoes” for the ground is holy.¹⁴

This is at the heart of *praying* without ceasing: being attentive and attending to what we see. It is as we go beyond *looking* to *seeing* that we can consciously relate all of life to God. Then we begin to see God as “the beyond in the midst of life”; we know him not on the borders but at the center of life.

In a beautiful testimony of this, Tom and Edna Boone, leaders of LAOS, a volunteer mission organization headquartered in Washington, D.C., shared their experience in Mississippi before prayer for them became a matter of “paying attention.”

Life was good—simple and uncomplicated. We had been blessed by the arrival of our first child, we had lovely friends in the church who hardly ever disagreed with us, and we were working successfully with our youth as friends and counselors. Indeed, from our vantage point, it did truly seem that God was in His heaven and all was right with the world!

What we could not seem to understand at that moment in history was that God was not in His heaven at all! He was starving to death in Calcutta and Lagos; He was rotting in prison in Bogotá and Sao Paulo; He was naked and sick in Big Stone Gap and Watts . . . and He was getting ready to march on Selma!¹⁵

D. H. Lawrence defined thought as “a man in his wholeness, wholly attending.” That’s really what prayer is: in our wholeness, *in our image-of-God-wholeness*, wholly attending, consciously relating our life, and all of life, to God.

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

Yesterday, you had three “signals” to call you to prayer: interruptions, situations, persons. These “signals” are all related to *prayer as attention*. Record here your prayer experience with:

a. *Interruptions* (List them and make notes about what your “Day by Day” prayer is meaning to you.)

b. *Situations* (What were the situations and how did you pray?)

c. *Persons* (Make notes describing your meetings with, or the attention you gave persons, and how you prayed.)

Close this period today, using the suggested morning or evening pattern suited to your time-situation. Hopefully your experience in situations and with persons yesterday will be a part of your praying today. Your petitions, intercessions, seeking guidance, and thanksgiving may be directly related to the situations in which you were involved, or the persons you encountered. Take as much time as you need.

During the day

Prayer as attention is a matter of discipline. A part of the discipline is giving attention to our "signals": interruptions, situations, persons. Hopefully you are adding some "signals" of your own to make living prayer a reality. Concentrate today on "turning aside to see"—attending to situations and persons that may be your "burning bush."

DAY SIX*Awareness.*

Irenaeus, one of the "fathers" of the early church, captured in a poignant sentence a dimension of prayer: "The glory of God is man fully alive." The glory of God is not man "on his knees," nor man pondering the Bible, nor man in the sanctuary, caught up in the ecstasy of worship, nor man giving a cup of cold water to another—none of these alone. "The glory of God is man fully alive."

This is what it means to pray without ceasing, to live our praying, to be alive—*aware*. Here is an understanding of prayer which makes praying without ceasing a viable possibility: PRAYER IS AWARENESS.

There are four levels, or dimensions of awareness, that make us fully alive to be the glory of God.

- a. *Awareness of self*—being in touch with my own feelings. What's going on inside me?
- b. *Awareness of others*—not just an acknowledgement that others exist, but that they are alive. Not just being "with others," but "presenc-ing" ourselves to them. Being alive to them, sharing in their lives and allowing them to share in mine.
- c. *Awareness of the world*—the world is not a prison from which we are to escape. Our flesh is not evil. The *world* is the house in which we who have been made *flesh* are to live. God made it all and "saw that it was good."
- d. *Awareness of God*—sensing the mystery, opening ourselves to the full expression of his indwelling Spirit, being alive to his action in others and the world.

The philosopher Martin Heidegger sees the condition of true knowledge to be "openness" to "what-is." That's awareness, and that's the proper stance of living prayer: to be open to what is. This means an openness and acceptance of myself as I am, of others as they are, of God as he is, of the world as it is, to be open to what God wants to do through us and others in the world.

Awareness is more natural for children than for adults. In the process of growth and aging, we shut ourselves off from experiences, close our minds, become calloused. Pain, embarrassment, sorrow, and failure train us to be selective in our experiencing. We build defenses against the possibility of what may be a negative or painful experience. So, we close ourselves off from much of life. *Many of us prefer the hell of a predictable*

situation, rather than risk the joy of **an unpredictable one**. So we play it safe.

Awareness, then, is not natural for **most** of us. It must be cultivated. To be alive to life requires effort and **discipline**. We have to run risks and be open to what may mean hurt and **failure**. But the possibility for joy and meaning far outweighs the negative **factors**.

And who says that pain, embarrassment, sorrow, or failure is not as much a part of life as happiness, **success**, laughter, or confidence? The landscape of life is rather blah **without** the shadows. *The glory of God is man fully alive.*

A whole person, one fully alive, is **in** communion with one's self, with others, with God and the world. It **may** well be that one's communion with God is dependent upon communion **with** self, others, and the world!

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

To begin to discipline yourself in **awareness**, you need to look at where you are now. How aware are you? **How** alive?

On a scale of one to ten (ten being "fully alive") rate yourself in awareness in the different areas. Simply **put** a check where you think you are today. If today is not typical for **you**—if something makes you feel unusually exhilarated, or if you are not feeling well—you may find it helpful to make two marks, one for today (✓) and one (x) for your more normal awareness.

AWARENESS OF SELF

1__ 2__ 3__ 4__ 5__ 6__ 7__ 8__ 9__ 10__

AWARENESS OF OTHERS

1__ 2__ 3__ 4__ 5__ 6__ 7__ 8__ 9__ 10__

AWARENESS OF THE WORLD

1__ 2__ 3__ 4__ 5__ 6__ 7__ 8__ 9__ 10__

AWARENESS OF GOD

1__ 2__ 3__ 4__ 5__ 6__ 7__ 8__ 9__ 10__

Write two or three sentences about **your** assessment of yourself in these areas.

AWARENESS OF SELF

AWARENESS OF OTHERS

AWARENESS OF THE WORLD

AWARENESS OF GOD

Now close this period of reflecting and recording by thinking about this scripture as it relates to being alive.

John's Gospel recalls Jesus saying:

I have loved you just as the Father has loved me. You must go on living in my love. If you keep my commandments you will live in my love just as I have kept my Father's commandments and live in his love. I have told you this so that you can share my joy, and that your happiness may be complete. This is my commandment: that you love each other as I have loved you. There is no greater love than this—that a man should lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I tell you to do. I shall not call you servants any longer; for a servant does not share his master's confidence. No, I call you friends, now, because I have told you everything that I have heard from the Father.

It is not that you have chosen me; but it is I who have chosen you. I have appointed you to go and bear fruit that will be lasting; so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you.

(John 15:9-16, Phillips)

After reflecting upon this scripture, close your period by using the guide to prayer you have used on previous days.

During the day

Continue responding to the "signals" which call you to prayer. Be especially sensitive to how such responses enhance your awareness—make you come alive to yourself, to others, to the world, to God. Be joyful in this thought: "The glory of God is man fully alive." (This is printed in large type on page 137. Cut it out, fold it as a "tent card" to place on the kitchen table, your desk, or in some obvious place for your attention.)

DAY SEVEN*Praying and living "in Christ."***5**

There is a very simple prayer called "the Jesus prayer" which can have tremendous meaning in your life. Some of the saints came to the point in their experience where, for long periods of time, they prayed only this prayer. "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

Consider the vast meaning of this simple petition.

Lord Jesus Christ—what does it mean to call Jesus Lord?

Son of God—what does it mean to confess Jesus as the Son of God?

What kind of God would give his Son in this fashion?

Me, a sinner—what does that mean at this moment in my life?

Have mercy—what does "mercy" mean? To utter the petition is to know that mercy is available. How do I "claim" that mercy?

Get in a relaxed position now, clear your mind, center your thoughts on this one sentence: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." If your mind picks up other thoughts and begins to wander, force your thinking back to this focus: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me, a sinner." You may want to repeat it two or three times. Spend five minutes or so now pondering the depth and meaning of this prayer for you today.

Based on your pondering write a sentence or two in response to the questions (listed above) related to the different dimensions of this prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ

Son of God

Me, a sinner

There is a very large number of people who are very much interested in the study of the history of the United States. They are interested in the history of the United States because they want to know how the United States came to be what it is today. They want to know the story of the United States from the beginning to the present.

The history of the United States is a very interesting story. It is a story of a people who have been able to build a great nation out of a small group of people who came from different parts of the world. The story of the United States is a story of a people who have been able to overcome many difficulties and have been able to build a great nation out of a small group of people who came from different parts of the world.

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Have mercy

Now look at a word which John's Gospel has Jesus saying:

I am the real vine, my Father is the vine-dresser. He removes any of my branches which are not bearing fruit and he prunes every branch that does bear fruit to increase its yield. Now, you have already been pruned by my words. You must go on growing in me and I will grow in you. For just as the branch cannot bear any fruit unless it shares the life of the vine, so you can produce nothing unless you go on growing in me. I am the vine itself, you are the branches. It is the man who shares my life and whose life I share who proves fruitful. For the plain fact is that apart from me you can do nothing at all. The man who does not share my life is like a branch that is broken off and withers away. He becomes just like the dry sticks that men pick up and use for firewood. But if you can live your life in me, and my words live in your hearts, you can ask for whatever you like and it will come true for you. This is how my Father will be glorified—in your becoming fruitful and being my disciples.

(John 15:1-8, Phillips)

In another section (chapter 14) John has Jesus saying, "Whatever you ask *in my name*, I will do it."

Paul's favorite description of a Christian was a person "in Christ." We cannot pray effectively without praying and living "in Christ."

Here is the secret of praying and living. Jesus came for one purpose: *to bring himself to us*, to bring God to us. He came to give us power to do and be those things that God requires of us. "To all who received him . . . he gave power to become children of God" (John 1:12, RSV). Other noble martyrs and prophets gave us their words and their example, but they could not give us the power to become like them. Only one has done that. We call him Savior and Lord!

At the heart of the good news is this truth which we must appropriate if we are to know the power of living prayer:

Jesus as the Christ is alive. He is with us. In his resurrected power he is present with us. He loved the world and never left it. He is among us now as much as, and maybe even more than, he was among us in the flesh. He invites us to accept the power of life he offers. "I am the true vine. . . . Abide in me, and I in you. . . . You are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit" (John 15:1-5, RSV). "If you live your life in me, and my words live in your hearts, you can ask for whatever you like and it will come true for you" (John 15:7, Phillips).

Until we grasp this or are grasped by it, we won't make much progress in Christian living and praying. When we know that we are guided by Christ, that he is the vine and we are the branches, we can claim power from the very Source of life to enliven, shape, change, and continually re-create us.

We live "in Christ" and we pray "in Christ." The power is not in our praying, but in our living and praying "in Christ."

This is the thrilling lifetime adventure to which we are called, and we can rest assured that what he promises he will provide. "You must go on growing in me and I will grow in you. For just as the branch cannot bear any fruit unless it shares the life of the vine, so you can produce nothing unless you go on growing in me. . . . It is the man who shares my life and whose life I share who proves fruitful."

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REFLECTING AND RECORDING

For seven days our emphasis has been upon praying without ceasing. Hopefully, you have begun something that will continue from now on: *intentionally seeking consciously to relate all of life to God.*

Has this effort made any difference in your life thus far? Are you coming anywhere near the goal of praying without ceasing? Spend a few minutes reflecting upon this. Write at least three or four sentences describing how you feel about this effort.

Christ is the vine; you and I are the branches. This means that we walk this day as God's own messengers. Whomever we meet, we meet in God's way. We are *with* every person and *in* every situation as the "presence" of Christ. Think about that. Write a few sentences about what that is going to mean to you today.

Close this time by praying, however you will.

During the day

Use "the Jesus prayer" for your "interruptions" today. Go back and review it to get it clearly in your mind.

Make this decision now: "I will either be Christ *to*, or receive Christ *from*, every person I meet today."

GROUP MEETING FOR WEEK FIVE

INTRODUCTION

Many do not pray because they do not understand prayer. They can't rationally comprehend how prayer works, how God's power is released in our lives through our prayers and the prayers of others, or how our praying may empower and even bring change in other persons. It is a great day in our lives when, without complete understanding or rational explanation, we begin to practice prayer in an intentional, committed way.

There is a sense in which prayer, like many of the profound experiences of life, is *absurd*. Mystery is present—the holy! There are experiences like lifetime commitment to another person in marriage, being overwhelmed by great music, made speechless by the grandeur of some piece of nature's handiwork, crying at the mystery of birth or self-sacrificing love, moving to ecstatic joy or deep soul-searching in worship. Such experiences may not make sense, and prayer is one of them. We pray because we must.

To enhance this experience, to turn all of life into a prayer, is what the discipline of praying is all about. This workbook is only an elemental introduction to the vast possibilities of living prayer. The possibilities unfold as we intentionally continue to pray.

You have made and are keeping a six-week commitment to this adventure. Knowing that many will want to continue the commitment, suggestions for a four-week extension are included on page 133. At this meeting you may want to discuss the possibility, and those who wish may make a decision to extend your adventure. If you make that decision, the group leader for this week will look at the suggestions for continuation and will order the resources immediately.

SHARING TOGETHER

1. Let each person share the "ingredient" of prayer that has become the most meaningful during these past two weeks.
2. Share your most meaningful experience of an interruption, situation, or person calling you to prayer.
3. Discuss the affirmation, "The glory of God is man fully alive."
 - a. How did you come out in your self-rating of awareness? Talk about your needs in particular areas (self-, other-, world-, God-awareness).
 - b. What changes in your awareness level in any area have come as a result of this prayer adventure?
 - c. Compare the four dimensions of awareness with the three arenas in which we operate as persons (private, institutional, group). Is your prayer experience bringing those arenas together to enable you to function as "one" whole person, with integrity?
4. "Many of us prefer the hell of a predictable situation, rather than risk the joy of an unpredictable one."
 - a. In what way has this statement been true in your experience?
 - b. A faithful response to God may bring unpredictable results. Is anyone in the group wrestling with the anxiety of a "call"—some "burn-

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
THE DIVISION OF THE PHYSICAL SCIENCES

CHICAGO, ILL.

Dear Sir: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 10th inst. and in reply to inform you that the same has been forwarded to the proper authorities for their consideration. I am sorry that I cannot give you a more definite answer at this time, but I am sure that you will understand the necessity of this delay. I am, Sir, very respectfully,
Yours truly,
[Signature]

Enclosed for you are two copies of the report of the Committee on the subject of the proposed change in the curriculum of the Division of the Physical Sciences.

I am, Sir, very respectfully,
Yours truly,
[Signature]

Very truly yours,

Enclosed for you are two copies of the report of the Committee on the subject of the proposed change in the curriculum of the Division of the Physical Sciences.

I am, Sir, very respectfully,
Yours truly,
[Signature]

Enclosed for you are two copies of the report of the Committee on the subject of the proposed change in the curriculum of the Division of the Physical Sciences.

I am, Sir, very respectfully,
Yours truly,
[Signature]

Enclosed for you are two copies of the report of the Committee on the subject of the proposed change in the curriculum of the Division of the Physical Sciences.

ing bush" that is demanding attention—which you may wish to share with the group?

5

PRAYING TOGETHER

Before you begin your specific time of prayer, look at your group prayer list (if you made one last week). Do you need to delete some person, concern, or need, and add others? Be sensitive to answered prayer and to the need of committing some person or concern to God in faith, trusting him to act in each situation, and offering yourself as an instrument of his redemptive love.

1. Begin your praying together with each person by saying "thank you" to God in a brief prayer of praise and thanksgiving. Do this in a few sentences—maybe only one. For what are you thankful? What is happening in your life to give meaning and joy?

2. Last week we considered the possibilities of power in the human touch. We mentioned the specific practice of "laying on of hands."

a. Are there persons who would like for the group to lay hands upon them and pray for them in a focused manner?

b. Sometimes "laying on of hands" *in proxy* has great meaning. There may be a person or need on your group prayer list, or one that comes to your mind now, which one of you would like to represent *in proxy*, while others lay hands upon you and pray. The "proxy" person should clarify the need he or she represents as fully as possible. (If the name must be withheld, the person may identify the need). The "proxy" person seeks to become one with the person for whom prayer is being offered.

3. A benediction is a blessing or greeting shared with another or with a group in parting. The "passing of the peace" is such a benediction. You take a person's hands and say, "The peace of God be with you," and the person responds, "And may his peace be yours." Then that person, taking the hands of the person next to him or her, says, "The peace of God be yours," and receives the response, "And may his peace be yours." Standing in a circle, let the leader "pass the peace," and let it go around the circle.

The Personality
100 COTTON CONTENT

Resources for Praying 6

DAY ONE

"Put yourself in the presence of God."

I myself have been made a minister of this same gospel, and though it is true at this moment that I am suffering on behalf of you who have heard the gospel, yet I am far from sorry about it. Indeed, I am glad, because it gives me a chance to complete in my own sufferings something of the untold pains which Christ suffers on behalf of his body, the Church.

For I am a minister of the Church by divine commission, a commission granted to me for your benefit and for a special purpose: that I might fully declare God's word—that sacred mystery which up till now has been hidden in every age and every generation, but which is now as clear as daylight to those who love God. They are those to whom God has planned to give a vision of the full wonder and splendor of his secret plan for the nations. And the secret is simply this: Christ in you! Yes, Christ in you bringing with him the hope of all the glorious things to come.

(Colossians 1:24-27, Phillips)

Sit quietly for two or three minutes with this verse of scripture at the center of your thinking:

The secret is simply this: Christ in you! Yes, Christ in you bringing with him the hope of all the glorious things to come.

Jesus was clear about one rule of prayer: "When you pray, go into a room by yourself, shut the door, and pray to your Father who is there in the secret place" (Matthew 6:6, NEB). In seeking a life of living prayer, there must be those times (and most of us need them daily) when we deliberately put ourselves in the presence of God. This is the time when we stop being "too elsewhere," and are there—there in our room, door shut, alone with God.

This does not mean that we have to be in a given room, at a given time, performing some established ritual of prayer. It does mean that we want to commune with God greatly enough that we will find a time and a place to give ourselves in an act of receptivity to God, that we will seek consciously to open ourselves to him, allowing him to influence our minds, hearts, and wills.

This six-week adventure in living prayer is a "practice run" (dress rehearsal) for what can become an ongoing pattern for you. In this last week of our workbook venture, we are exploring some possible resources for



Resources for Playing

DAY ONE

How to play the game of life

1. The first rule of the game is that you must always play with a clean conscience. This means that you must always be honest and fair to everyone you play with. If you are caught cheating, you will be disqualified from the game.

2. The second rule is that you must always play with a positive attitude. This means that you must always be happy and friendly to everyone you play with. If you are caught being negative, you will be disqualified from the game.

Remember to always play with a clean conscience and a positive attitude.

3. The third rule is that you must always play with a sense of purpose. This means that you must always have a goal in mind when you play the game. If you are caught playing without a purpose, you will be disqualified from the game.

4. The fourth rule is that you must always play with a sense of responsibility. This means that you must always be responsible for your actions and the actions of others. If you are caught being irresponsible, you will be disqualified from the game.

5. The fifth rule is that you must always play with a sense of respect. This means that you must always respect the rights and feelings of everyone you play with. If you are caught being disrespectful, you will be disqualified from the game.

6. The sixth rule is that you must always play with a sense of teamwork. This means that you must always work together with others to achieve a common goal. If you are caught playing without a sense of teamwork, you will be disqualified from the game.

7. The seventh rule is that you must always play with a sense of integrity. This means that you must always do what is right, even when no one is watching. If you are caught being dishonest, you will be disqualified from the game.

praying, resources that will enhance and enrich your "alone with God" period.

Today the focus is upon the beginning of your "alone with God" time. The saints of the ages who have described their prayer patterns invariably begin with a common exercise: In one way or another, they deliberately put themselves in the presence of God. Most of the great "masters" of prayer have insisted that our prayer in secret must be formal at the start.

As we considered last week, this is a matter of *attention*. But now our attention is focused on a definite period of prayer. Simone Weil reminds us that prayer is attention. It is the orientation of all the attention of which the soul is capable towards God.

Many people find that a particular *place* for daily prayer is an invaluable aid. I personally find that I can focus my attention better in my study than any place else. It may be that a comfortable chair in the den, or living room, or bedroom will be your place, your "closet." I know a businessman who has a chair in the corner of his office where he makes his rendezvous with God.

The point is that many of us need a place to which we come in deliberate fashion. We are coming to "meet" God. In an act of commitment, we turn our attention to God. How we focus our attention varies from person to person. It may or may not affect our *feeling*. It really is a matter of *will*.

Here I am, Lord. I am here to meet you. I acknowledge your presence. I am going to spend this time with you. Help me to realize that I am *in your presence*, you are with me, even though I may not feel your presence.

Some people find it helpful, as they settle in their place, to begin their time alone with God by praying (sometimes silently, sometimes aloud) the Lord's Prayer.

Currently, I'm finding this exercise meaningful. I come to my place (my study), reminding myself that I am meeting God there. I stand erect, and begin to breathe deeply, and exhale completely. I try to get "in control" of my body by breathing. Then, I enter into a devotional-breathing exercise. As I breathe in deeply, I say to myself, "The secret is simply this: Christ in you!" I hold my breath as I say further to myself, "Yes, Christ in me." Then I exhale completely as I finish this affirmation of scripture: "bringing with him the hope of all the glorious things to come."

I repeat this deep rhythmic breathing a number of times. There's nothing magical about this kind of exercise; I just find that not only do I get my body under control through breathing, I get my mind focused in attention to Christ through immersing myself in this great affirmation—claiming his presence within me.

You will find your own way in focusing attention, because unless prayer begins with *attention*—deliberately putting yourself in the presence of God—it is not likely to begin.

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

Experiment with this devotional-breathing exercise. First, go back and read the entire passage of scripture printed at the beginning of this session.

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Stand up now and breathe deeply, hold your breath a moment, then exhale completely. Do it rhythmically now as you fill your mind with these thoughts:

Breathing in—"The secret is simply this, Christ in me!"

Holding breath—"Yes, Christ in me."

Exhaling—"Bringing with him the hope of all the glorious things to come."

When you have repeated this breathing pattern a number of times, settle down in a relaxed position and continue your prayer period in whatever fashion is meaningful to you.

During the day

If you haven't done so by now, get this verse of scripture solidly in your mind. Clip it from page 137 to carry with you today.

The secret is simply this: Christ in you! Yes, Christ in you bringing with him the hope of all the glorious things to come.

During the day when you are tired, uptight, frustrated, weary, uncertain, or confused, stop whatever you are doing and perform this breathing exercise to the rhythm of this verse of scripture. Not only will you regain "control" of your physical self and perspective, you will be filled with the power and certainty of the indwelling Christ.

Don't forget "the Jesus prayer": "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me, a sinner." Continue to use it in your interruptions.

Yesterday you were asked to make this decision: "I will either be Christ *to*, or receive Christ *from*, every person I meet today." Renew that decision and act upon it today.

DAY TWO

"Not by bread alone."

For two days you have been asked to *either be Christ to, or receive Christ from, every person you met*. Did you respond to that? If so, record here some things that happened as a result of that deliberate effort.

What about the devotional breathing exercise? Did you have occasion to try it? Note here the results.

John Wesley once wrote, "Whether you like it or no, read and pray daily. It is for your life; there is no other way; else you will be a trifler all your days. . . . Do justice to your soul; give it time and means to grow. Do not starve yourself any longer."¹⁶

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit up into the desert, to be tempted by the devil. After a fast of forty days and nights he was very hungry.

"If you really are the Son of God," said the tempter, coming to him, "tell these stones to turn into loaves."

Jesus answered, "The scripture says 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.'"

(Matthew 4:1-4, Phillips)

All the commandment which I command you this day you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord swore to give to your fathers. And you shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments, or not. And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know; that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but that man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.

(Deuteronomy 8:1-3, RSV)

Jesus was equipped to deal with the devil in the wilderness. He had done justice to his soul, having lived with the scripture. So, when, in his gnawing hunger, the temptation of turning stones into bread came, Jesus' mind went back to the wilderness trek of his forefathers, and the lesson God had taught: "Man shall not live by bread alone."

By including scripture as a part of our daily adventure, I've been saying implicitly what I want to make explicit now: *Scripture is a primary resource for praying.* It is impossible for me to imagine that we can develop a meaningful life of prayer without living with the scripture.

There are many ways to read and study the Bible. Our focus here is upon reading the Bible as a part of our praying. Such reading, while informed by our best understanding of scripture, should not be laborious or primarily critical. (There is a place for critical study.) Rather, we need to read expectantly. Believe that through the Bible God is going to speak to you. Come to your reading with the sense that you are entering the land of the Spirit. People of God have shared their venture of faith, and now you are journeying with them. Be *expectant* about the discoveries you will make.

Deliberately put yourself into it. Keep asking, "Is it I?" Be ready for revelation. Let what you read search, even accuse. Let it comfort and heal. Accept the challenge or guidance that is for you.

Test it by Jesus. The Bible is the record of men and women groping for God, their struggle to be God's people, their fumbling and growing in understanding of who God is and what God expected of them. Jesus is

6

our revelation of God and our guide to full humanity under God. So, we need to use our best understanding of the Gospels to find out who this Jesus is, what he taught, and how those teachings were appropriated at the time. We need to immerse ourselves in this Jesus, to live with him as he is witnessed to and shared in the New Testament. We test the total witness of the Bible by him.

Remember that the Bible belongs to human life. It came out of the experience of flesh and blood, the dark problems of human existence and the bright light of human-divine communion. Thus it is the word of God through humans, for humans.

In using the scripture as a prayer resource, we should read by "thought," "incident," or "lesson." Don't be intent on reading an entire chapter, or an entire book. Read for the message. It may be in a few verses or many.

For your reflection today stay with the "bread" theme by considering a passage from John.

They said, "What sign can you give us to see, so that we may believe you? What is the work you do? Our ancestors had manna to eat in the desert; as Scripture says, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" Jesus answered, "I tell you this: the truth is, not that Moses gave you the bread from heaven, but that my Father gives you the real bread from heaven. The bread that God gives comes down from heaven and brings life to the world."

They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread now and always." Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall never be hungry, and whoever believes in me shall never be thirsty. But you, as I said, do not believe although you have seen. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and the man who comes to me I will never turn away. I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. It is his will that I should not lose even one of all that he has given me, but raise them all up on the last day. For it is my Father's will that everyone who looks upon the Son and puts his faith in him shall possess eternal life; and I will raise him up on the last day."

(John 6:30-40, NEB)

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

Experiment again with the method of discovery which you used on day three of last week in reflecting upon the above passage of scripture. You may want to read it again.

1. What does the scripture say? While all reading involves interpretation, don't let that obscure what is actually in the text. Simply try to hear what is said. Record in your own words here.

2. What does the scripture mean to you right now? What is Jesus trying to say? Try to interpret, to discover the meaning behind the words.

Note: Through the ages, Christians have found it helpful to test their interpretations of scripture against the interpretations the Spirit has given to the whole community. You, too, may wish to share your meaning of the scripture with others sharing this adventure with you.

3. If you decided to act upon the message of this scripture, what would that mean? Would there be any changes in your life? What changes? If you accept this word as Jesus' word to you today, what would you have to do in response? Write your answers here.

Move to a brief time of deliberate prayer. You may wish to use the devotional-breathing exercise suggested yesterday. Then settle down in a relaxed position and continue your prayer period in whatever fashion is meaningful to you. Your experience with the scripture will probably become the focus of your praying.

During the day

Continue to use "the Jesus Prayer" in your interruptions.

Look at your home library and see how many different translations of the Bible you have. If you don't have a good modern translation (Revised Standard, Phillips, New English, Good News for Modern Man) then treat yourself today. If you can't find one in a local bookstore, order one from your church publishing house. If you want to have a big treat, secure a copy of The New Testament in Four Versions: King James, Revised Standard, Phillips, and New English Bible (all in one volume). You will probably have to order this through your church publishing house.

The purpose behind using different translations is not to find one which lends itself to what you would like it to say, but to expose yourself to different possibilities of having God address you through his Word. Sometimes this is an assuring experience; sometimes it makes us face things we don't want to hear. Since we trust God's goodness, we can open ourselves to whatever he would say to us.

If you didn't have the occasion to try the devotional-breathing exercise during the day yesterday, keep the possibility in mind for today. If you did, and another occasion for its use arises today, try it.

DAY THREE

"Being quiet before the Word."

Imagination and meditation are great resources for praying. Entire books have been written on "meditation," as well as on "mental" prayer.

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In this workbook, I simply want to introduce a possibility for the use of imagination and meditation with scripture as a meaningful way to enhance a life of prayer.

Here are the guidelines for your use for this manner of praying:

1. *Center down, deliberately placing yourself in the presence of God.* We considered this first step in prayer on day one of this week. (You may want to review that.)

2. *Be quiet before the Word.* Select a passage of scripture (the parables of Jesus especially lend themselves to this approach). Read the passage slowly, giving it your full attention.

3. *Be passively open.* Don't try to "figure things out," but be open to leading and suggestion. Don't try to impose your rationalization or logic on the scripture at this point.

4. *Deliberately focus your mind on the scripture.* Let your imagination become active, cooperating with God in becoming aware of whatever thoughts or feelings come from the content of the scripture you are considering. This cooperation may take many forms. Honest struggling and searching are signs of your willingness and sincerity to hear God's Word addressed to you. When you do find yourself struggling over a tough or obscure saying, make sure it's a cooperative struggling!

5. *Listen to the scripture speaking to you.* Try to feel what you would feel if you were one of the persons in the scripture or another of the persons or another. Try to get in touch with your own feelings as you respond to the "action" or "relationships" or "attitudes" present in the scripture with which you are living.

6. *Make whatever application to your life seems appropriate.* Deal with the feelings that come.

Here is a brief example: Jesus said,

Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one was a Pharisee, the other was a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed like this with himself, "O God, I do thank thee that I am not like the rest of mankind, greedy, dishonest, impure, or even like that tax collector over there. I fast twice every week; I give away a tenth part of all my income."

But the tax collector stood in a distant corner, scarcely daring to look up to Heaven, and with a gesture of despair, said, "God, have mercy on a sinner like me."

I assure you that he was the man who went home justified in God's sight rather than the other one. For everyone who sets himself up as somebody will become a nobody, and the man who makes himself nobody will become somebody.

(Luke 18:10-14, Phillips)

MY RESPONSE

I want to be a somebody! I am somebody, but I have not always known that. What did Jesus mean? "Everyone who sets himself up as a somebody will become a nobody."

Somebody and nobody are big words for me—too big. Coming out of poverty and cultural deprivation, I've struggled with that "somebody/nobody" business. Deep resentments have been gnawing away at my life, my personhood. Much of my life has been spent trying to be what I thought was a "somebody," trying to prove to people that I was not a "nobody."

Even though I have my past in perspective and I've overcome my resentments, still I fall back into the snare. I sometimes want to stand in the middle of the

crowd and say, "See here, I've made it; I am worthy of your acceptance; I've proved myself." Is that what was going on with the Pharisee? He had worked hard at his religion. I've worked hard at mine. I've tried to be "good"—I've been "good." I can't say I'm not greedy as he could, because I do find myself grasping at "things." I'm honest. I'm pure, not always pure in my thinking and attitudes, but pure in my overt acts—at least most of the time. I tithe. I pray. I even fast sometimes! That ought to mean something. *Yeah! I can feel with that Pharisee in the middle of the temple.*

The tax collector, over in the corner—I can feel with him, too. Not in the same way of being a blatant sinner, begging God for mercy, but crying out for some sign of his presence. I'm caught—or I feel I am. I don't want to be "religious" like that Pharisee, but in my particular ministry, people are wanting to put me in a mold of righteousness—I feel they are expecting more "spiritual" power from me than I possess. I go somewhere to teach about prayer and people want a "giant of the spirit" to stand among them and show them how to pray. I want to slink over in a corner and pray for mercy for myself. And I do!

I guess I'm somewhere between the Pharisee and the tax collector. I want to be "somebody." I don't want to be a "nobody." I am *somebody*. I hear you, Jesus! Being *somebody*, and pretending to be "somebody" are two different things. The *somebody* I am will keep on resisting the efforts of people to make a phony "spiritual giant" out of me. The *somebody* that I am will continue to feel my need for mercy and perspective. The *somebody* that I am will continue to be the *somebody* that gets my identity and sense of self-worth from what I am inside and the wholeness that I feel. I'll be humble in my relationship to you and to others—or will try to be! I won't exalt myself, or try to prove myself. I'll try to be one of your unique *somebodies* among all the *somebodies* of the world. I'll keep trying never to think of another as a "nobody."

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

Go back now and review the guidelines and apply them to your consideration of the familiar parable of the prodigal son. Be quiet in the way that has been suggested and illustrated.

Again he said: "There was once a man who had two sons; and the younger said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the property.' So he divided his estate between them. A few days later the younger son turned the whole of his share into cash and left home for a distant country, where he squandered it in reckless living. He had spent it all, when a severe famine fell upon that country and he began to feel the pinch. So he went and attached himself to one of the local landowners, who sent him onto his farm to mind the pigs. He would have been glad to fill his belly with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. Then he came to his senses and said, 'How many of my father's paid servants have more food than they can eat, and here am I, starving to death! I will set off and go to my father, and say to him, "Father, I have sinned, against God and against you; I am no longer fit to be called your son; treat me as one of your paid servants."' So he set out for his father's house. But while he was still a long way off his father saw him, and his heart went out to him. He ran to meet him, flung his arms around him, and kissed him. The son said, 'Father, I have sinned, against God and against you; I am no longer fit to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! fetch a robe, my best one, and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet. Bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us have a feast to celebrate the day. For this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found.' And the festivities began.

"Now the elder son was out on the farm; and on his way back, as he approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked what it meant. The servant told him, 'Your brother has come home, and your father has killed the fatted calf because he has him



back safe and sound.' But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and pleaded with him; but he retorted, 'You know how I have slaved for you all these years; I never once disobeyed your orders; and you never gave me so much as a kid, for a feast with my friends. But now that this son of yours turns up, after running through your money with his women, you kill the fatted calf for him.' 'My boy,' said the father, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. How could we help celebrating this happy day? Your brother here was dead and has come back to life, was lost and is found.'"

(Luke 15:11-32, NEB)

MY RESPONSE (Write your response here.)

During the day

Once before, you were asked to share with someone who is not a part of this adventure what this experience is meaning to you. Do that again today—maybe with the same person (if you can remember), bringing that person up to date on where you are in this experience. You may want to share with more than one if the occasion arises, but at least share with one.

Continue to use your "signals" to call you to prayer.

DAY FOUR

Praying the Psalms.

Another rich resource for praying is the Psalms. The Psalms were used as the "prayer book" of ancient Israel and, no doubt, by Jesus. Jesus died with a psalm on his lips, and I'm sure, with a psalm in his heart.

I come back to this resource often, and my plan is simple. I begin at the first psalm, and I read until a particular psalm or portion of a psalm grabs me, until some fire is sparked in my soul. I reflect upon that and let it get into my mind. I make it my own and relate it to where I am at that particular time in my life.

The next day, I begin where I left off on the previous day. I read until my mind stands at attention before some relevant thought or truth. I continue that process until I have finished the Psalms. I lay the Psalms aside, then, turning to some other resource. I have returned to the Psalms at other times to find, on another journey through them, that other fires are sparked from different psalms than from previous readings.

I usually write my prayers and responses to these psalms in a kind of spiritual diary. I find that I can go back and read the thoughts, feelings, and prayers of previous days as a resource for my praying now.

Here is a sample. In one of my journeys I came to Psalm 19, and began to read:

The heavens are telling the glory of God;
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.
Day to day pours forth speech,
and night to night declares knowledge.
There is no speech, nor are there words;
their voice is not heard;
yet their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.

In them he has set a tent for the sun,
which comes forth like a bridegroom
leaving his chamber,
and like a strong man runs its course with joy.
Its rising is from the end of the heavens,
and its circuit to the end of them;
and there is nothing hid from its heat.

The law of the Lord is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the testimony of the Lord is sure,
making wise the simple;
the precepts of the Lord are right,
rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the Lord is pure,
enlightening the eyes;
the fear of the Lord is clean,
enduring for ever;
the ordinances of the Lord are true,
and righteous altogether.

(Psalm 19:1-9, RSV)

(On another journey these were the words that had caught my attention: *the law, testimony, precepts, commandment, fear, and ordinances of the Lord*—but not this particular morning. I read on.)

More to be desired are they than gold,
even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey
and drippings of the honeycomb.

Moreover by them is thy servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.
But who can discern his errors?
Clear thou me from hidden faults.
Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins;
let them not have dominion over me!
Then I shall be blameless,
and innocent of great transgression.

(Psalm 19:10-13, RSV)

I was stopped short, almost abruptly. The words began to turn in my mind.

*But who can discern his errors?
Clear thou me from hidden faults.
Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins;
let them not have dominion over me!*

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After living with that for a while, lettting it tumble around in my mind and heart, I wrote in my diary:

Lord, this is where I am, this is my need.
Just last night Jerry (my wife) reminded me
of how I hurt her earlier in the day.
A friend had come; we were excited.
Conversation flowed like a rushing stream.
But I "hogged" it!
Twice Jerry tried to share from the depths of herself,
wanting to bring Gary up to date on her own pilgrimage.
Twice I had cut her off, not allowing her to
share, so intent upon myself.
I didn't know I had done it
until she courageously confronted me with it.
Thank you, God, for her courage!
She confronted me
only after I made what I thought was a perceptive comment
about another couple who were with us:
"They certainly are out of touch with each other —
don't seem to be communicating at all —
just talking past each other."
She couldn't stifle her hurt
so she told me of my calloused blundering.
O Lord, *clear thou me of hidden faults.*
I saw the *splinter* in my friends' eyes
but was unaware of the *beam* in my own.
*Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins,
let them not have dominion over me.*
I am so presumptuous, Lord.
Forgive me.

I shared my prayer experience with Jerry that same day. So, not only did I ask God's forgiveness for my "hidden faults" and "presumptuous sins," I sought to make amends with my wife for my callousness.

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

It constantly amazes me that almost every day I find the trigger for my reflection, confession, affirmation, thanksgiving, intercession, and celebration in the Psalms. I believe you will find it so. Try it.

Turn in your Bible to the Psalms. Begin reading with the first psalm. Read until something demands your attention. Record here the portion of the psalm upon which you focus.

Now, let the words come alive in your mind. Think about them. What do these words mean to you now? Live with them for a while. Then write your response here—maybe as a prayer, maybe just as an expression of feeling.

During the day

Pick out one verse or section of the psalm you have been considering and memorize it. If you don't have time to memorize it, write it on a piece of paper and take it with you during the day. Consider it often to remind you of this experience.

DAY FIVE

"Soak your soul in the great models."

Begin in the Psalms where you left off yesterday. Read until you come to the thoughts, feelings, petitions, which are *for you* today. Record those verses here.

Let these verses ferment in your mind. Think about them. What do they mean to you now? Live with them for a while. Then as you did yesterday, write your response here—maybe as a prayer, maybe just as an expression of feeling.

* * * * *

Not long ago I spent a couple of hours with Elton Trueblood, one of the great examples and interpreters of Christian living in our time. Dr. Trueblood is a Quaker, thus coming from a rich heritage of prayer and personal piety.

I had only recently come to my ministry with The Upper Room, seeking to inspire, motivate, and provide resources for people to recover a vital prayer life. So, I asked Dr. Trueblood: "If you were given this assignment for ministry, how would you go about it, what would you do?"

Among many things that he said, this one still stands out: "However you do it, Maxie, try to motivate people to *soak their souls in the great models*. Get them to live with the saints, the classic books of prayer and spiritual pilgrimage."

On the elevator, going to my room on another floor in the hotel where both Dr. Trueblood and I were staying that day, I was certain that what he said was true. As I reflected upon it, as a witness confirming the truth of it, the words of Frank Laubach, one of those modern models in whom we need to "soak our souls," came vividly to my mind.



I climbed "Signal Hill" back of my house talking and listening to God all the way up, all the way back, all the lovely half hour on the top. And God talked back! . . . Below me lay the rice fields and as I looked across them, I heard my tongue saying aloud, "Child, just as the rice needs the sunshine every day, and could not grow if it had sun only once a week or one hour a day, so you need me all day of every day. People over all the world are withering because they are open toward God only rarely. Every waking minute is not too much."

A few months ago I was trying to write a chapter on "the discovering of God." Now that I have discovered Him I find that it is a continuous discovery. Every day is rich with new aspects of Him and His working. As one makes new discoveries about his friends by being with them, so one discovers the "individuality" of God if one entertains Him continuously. One thing I have seen this week is that God loves beauty. Everything He makes is lovely. The clouds, the tumbling river, the waving lake, the soaring eagle, the slender blade of grass, the whispering of the wind, the fluttering butterfly, this graceful transparent nameless child of the lake which clings to my window for an hour and vanishes forever. Beautiful craft of God! And I know that He makes my thought-life beautiful when I am open all the day to Him. If I throw these mind-windows apart and say, "God, what shall we think of now?" He answers always in some graceful, tender dream.

And I know that God is love-hungry, for He is constantly pointing me to some dull, dead soul which He has never reached and wistfully urges me to help Him reach that stolid, tight-shut mind. O God, how I long to help You with these [Maranaws]. And with these Americans! And with these Filipinos! All day I see souls dead to God look sadly out of hungry eyes. I want them to know my discovery! That any minute can be paradise, that any place can be heaven! That any man can have God! That every man *does have God* the moment he speaks to God, or listens for Him!¹⁷

I had committed that "letter" to memory years before when, as a young minister just out of seminary in my first parish, I was making some deliberate, though fumbling, steps on my prayer pilgrimage. It had been years since I had specifically lived with the "classics" and great models of prayer. I had moved on to what I thought were more modern, more relevant expressions, but the depth of their experiences was still imprinted upon my soul. I could still quote much of the passage from memory.

At the close of this workbook, there is a list of resources we can use to "soak our souls in the great models." Many of these books are in paperback, thus very inexpensive and available to everyone.

For now "soak your soul" in his great prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, one of the great models:

I beseech Thee, O Lord, that the fiery and sweet strength of Thy love may absorb my soul from all things that are under heaven, and I may die for love of Thy love as Thou didst deign to die for the love of my love.¹⁸

During the day

Look at the list of "classics" at the close of the workbook. Do you have one of them in your home library? If so, take a look at it sometime today. Maybe you would like to start reading one of them.

If you don't have any of these, call your church or public library. The chances are you will find some of them. Check one out to peruse in the days ahead.

Continue seeking consciously to relate all of life to God by using the "signals" that are meaningful to you.

Note: The Upper Room publishes a set of twenty-nine booklets in a series entitled, *Living Selections from Great Devotional Classics*. This is an excellent introduction to some of the great models. You may order these from The Upper Room, 1908 Grand Avenue, Nashville, Tennessee 37203. Cost, \$5.00 for the entire set.

DAY SIX

"Going within."

O God, You know me inside and out, through and through.

Everything I do,
every thought that flits through my mind,
every step I take,
every plan I make,
every word I speak,

You know, even before these things happen.

You know my past;

You know my future.

Your circumventing presence covers my every move.

Your knowledge of me sometimes comforts me,
sometimes frightens me;

But always it is far beyond my comprehension.

There is no way to escape You, no place to hide.

If I ascend to the heights of joy,

You are there before me.

If I am plunged into the depths of despair,

You are there to meet me.

I could fly to the other side of our world

and find You there to lead the way.

I could walk into the darkest of nights,

only to find You there to lighten its dismal hours.

You were present at my very conception.

You guided the development of my unformed

members within the body of my mother.

Nothing about me, from beginning to end,

was hid from Your eyes.

How frightfully and fantastically wonderful it all is!

May Your all-knowing, everywhere-present

Spirit continue to search out my feelings and thoughts.

Deliver me from that which may hurt or destroy me,

And guide me along the paths of love and truth.¹⁹

During the second week of this adventure we lived with Jesus' instruction about prayer. The emphasis was upon being alone before God. We want to push that again with our focus upon *going within* as a resource for praying.

Communion is the heartbeat of prayer, because prayer is essentially encounter—the meeting between persons and God. Communion requires two persons, each being really himself or herself. Implicit in our adventure has been the fact that our praying is affected by our understanding

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of who God is. This understanding is never complete, because we will never know God completely. This underscores the significance of our living with the scripture and praying and living in Christ.

Not only should we seek deeper understanding of God; living prayer involves a continuous quest of self-understanding. Because so many of our relationships are superficial and much of life is "surface-living," our temptation is to put forth in prayer someone who is not our real self—a pretension. So Jesus warned, "When you pray, don't be like the play actors." We are not entering into vital communion if we remain our "stage personality" when we come to prayer—to our meeting with God.

We need to remember that we are many selves. The man Jesus found dwelling among the tombs said, we are "legion, for we are many." In prayer we go inward to bring to our meeting with God all these selves. This is one way of experiencing our many selves, naming these selves before God, in order that there may not only be communion between persons and God but that the many "little" selves that make up a person may have communion with each other and be integrated.

I am often prone to self-pity, self-condemnation, even self-rejection because I often see one of my "little-selves" as the whole me. If my greedy self emerges as it often does, driving me to seek things I didn't have in childhood, or if I become too security-conscious because of past poverty experience, I have to be careful not to see that as the entire me—likewise, when I'm jealous, lustful, possessive, hateful, prejudiced, etc.

I go within in prayer to experience integrity, to bring this kingdom of selves that I am together in the presence of God, seeking to make Jesus Lord of this inner kingdom.

"Going within" is a resource for praying because this is a continuous process, never a finished one. By our very nature as persons, we are "in the making" as Christians. This is emphatically so. We are "Christians under construction, always bringing the many facets of our lives to the living Christ to be perfected.

Some warnings need to be sounded here. "Going inward" should never become a morbid preoccupation. We can become so tied up in introspection that our spirits become impotent, so intent on self that we miss God. Our "going inward" is for that purpose: to meet God in honest encounter.

"Going inward" may be boring. You may find no exciting landscapes as you travel inward. If your journey inward is a new venture and you have lived pretty much on the surface, you may think nothing is there. Keep pressing inward. Real beauty and meaning are there in you. God created you, *in his image*.

"Going inward" is sometimes a frightening experience. We uncover dimensions of self we never recognized or admitted before. Since we are journeying with God and to God there is no reason for this to be a journey of fear. Don't try to cover up what you find within or deceive yourself by trying to deceive God. Speak frankly to him, "naming yourself" before him, not that he does not know, but that it will help you overcome your fear by naming it. There is also a great difference between assuming that someone we love knows all about us, and having the courage honestly to speak truthfully about ourselves to that person. It is helpful in prayer to voice even our *uneasiness* about meeting God.

"Going inward" may become an escape or evasion of true interpersonal relationships. We must remember that we not only meet God within our-

selves, we meet him in others. Awareness of others, and deliberate involvement with them, is as vital as self-awareness.

Many resources are available for our "going inward," such as *Our Many Selves* by Elizabeth O'Connor. To begin, however, we have only to look in that direction—inward—to realize that within is the whole self God intended us to be. His image is stamped upon us. We can grow into the fullness of that potential, "in the likeness of Christ."

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

Start the process now. Begin to look beneath the surface. Don't hurry. Try to identify and observe the different selves in you. You can begin by listing the roles you play in life: husband, wife, parent, teacher, housewife, salesman, engineer, nurse. List these roles in the left-hand column. After you've made the listing, in the right-hand column record some dimensions of the self that emerge as you play that role. (Example: Father—working to provide living; protective and supportive; disciplinarian.)

ROLE

DIMENSIONS OF SELF

As you close this period now, include something like this in your prayer:
 "Help me, Lord, to put off all pretenses and find my true self."

During the day

Try to observe yourself in your different roles today. Note the different "selves" that come forth.

Are you still working with the signals which may call you to prayer: interruptions, situations, persons? Have you added any more? Think about other possible signals and add them to your list today.

DAY SEVEN

Prayer and action—"The glory of God is man fully alive!"

"There is a certain class of demons that can only be chased away by prayer"—the demons of deafness to God, dumbness in thanksgiving, self-sufficiency,



worry, despair and solitude. But there is another class that can only be chased away by action—the demons of illusion, sentimentality and infantilism, narcissism and laziness. So if we cultivate prayer exclusively, we harbor the second lot, and if we cultivate action exclusively, we harbor the first lot.

Christianity leaves the famous and false distinction between action and contemplation far behind: it is participation; its prayer is love in action and its action is inspired by love. God is not the object and fixed goal of our quest; he is its active principle, cause and motive power. Love is not made to be loved, but to be loving.²⁰

On day six of last week we considered *awareness* as the primary meaning of praying without ceasing. The four dimensions of this awareness are awareness of self, awareness of others, awareness of the world, and awareness of God. The truth is, all of these dimensions are interrelated. There are no clear lines designating self-awareness or other-awareness or God-awareness. To be really alive is to be aware in all these dimensions. And "the glory of God," said Irenaeus, "is man fully alive."

Whatever techniques we use, the dynamic of prayer is communion with God. *The goal of prayer is a life of friendship and fellowship with him, co-operation with his Spirit, living his life in the world.* So, we are considering, in this final session, the possibility of PRAYING OUR LIVES.

Awareness is often painful, because awareness always leads to sensitive involvement. That's the reason prayer can never be considered as an isolated part of life. Jesus said, "Not everyone who says, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of the Father."

Praying our lives means doing the will of the Father! Praying our lives means living his life in the world! Praying our lives means modeling our lives after Jesus, the primary example of prayer-living! Praying our lives means *being* Christ to, or *receiving* Christ from, every person we meet!

Here it is from Jesus himself:

Then the King will say to those at his right hand, "Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me. . . ."

Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?"

And the King will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me."

(Matthew 25:34-40, RSV)

"The glory of God is man fully alive."

Man alive to all the selves that are stirring within him, and to the struggle of Christ seeking to be "shaped within."

Man alive to the Spirit, the image of God in others, God speaking to us through them, and to them through us!

Man alive to the suffering of others and to the brokenness of life.

Man alive to the possibility of reconciliation—"sons of God coming into their own."

Man alive to the events of history through which God is seeking to reveal himself.

Man alive to all of creation "groaning" for perfection as the kingdom of God.

"The glory of God is man fully alive"—*man alive to the living Christ*. Only in his power can we pray with our lives. Here is one who has loved the world and never left it. He came to bring himself, to bring us power to do and be what God wants us to be and do: "To all who received him, . . . he gave power to become children of God."

It is in his resurrected power that we are to pray with our lives. He invites us to open ourselves to his energy and to go from this meager beginning to the triumph of experiencing the glory of God by being fully alive.

I am the true vine. . . . Abide in me, and I in you. . . . You are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit.
(John 15:1-5, RSV)

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

Think about what you have been experiencing for the past six weeks. List some of the most significant things that have happened to you.

What is your commitment now in relation to "praying with your life"?

Think about the persons who have shared this journey with you. Think of them one by one. Pray for them one by one. You may even want to perform some specific act of gratitude or appreciation for some of them who have been especially meaningful to you.

During the day and the coming days

Put into practice all those things that "work" for you in making prayer a whole-life experience.

6**GROUP MEETING FOR WEEK SIX**

Needs for group work: chalkboard or newsprint.

INTRODUCTION

The "doing" dimension of prayer cannot be overemphasized. The old saying "To work is to pray" is true. It is also true that *to pray is to work*. Prayer is action. It is the integrating force of our *being* and *doing*.

The rhythm of action and reflection is the pattern of living prayer: being alone with God, reflecting upon how he comes to us, seeking his will, appropriating his strength, and acting according to what guidance and power we have—living his life in the world by checking our signals with him and fellow pilgrims.

If you are not continuing this as a group experience, you may wish to covenant with one other person as "prayer partners," or you may have sensed that two or three in the group have a special interest in intercessory prayer. Before you leave the meeting, explore with them the possibility of a shared ministry of intercession.

If you are going to extend this adventure as a group, make your plans for meeting times and places, and see that persons have the resources which the leader ordered.

SHARING TOGETHER

1. Share with the group your most meaningful day with the workbook this week.

2. Take a few minutes to reflect upon this six-week experience. Let each person make a brief, simple statement as to what difference this prayer adventure has made in his or her life. Select a person to record in a brief sentence or phrase each of these statements on a chalkboard or on newsprint.

3. Let each person in the group share his or her greatest difficulty in making prayer a part of a "living" experience.

4. What one "call" do you feel? Let each person voice what specific commitment to growth, change, and/or discipline he or she is willing to make.

5. Identify the one "action" to which your group as a whole, or two or three of you, may be corporately called. Write this on a chalkboard or on newsprint.

PRAYING TOGETHER

Your praying together in this closing session should reflect as much of your total group experience as possible. Consider the following possibilities.

For the needs of persons:

1. Each person take a turn in a chair in the center of the room. Let all the group lay hands upon that person, with those who wish offering verbal prayers which reflect your experience with that person during this six weeks. Give each person, as he or she comes to the chair, the opportunity to voice a need that may have not yet surfaced in the group, but which he or she is now willing to share.

2. Sometimes persons with problems—anxiety, fear, or distrust—can be ministered to by entrusting themselves to the group to confirm trust. A person may lie on the floor and allow the group literally to raise him or her up and be lifted into the air in commitment to God. It is amazing what such an experience of trust can do for a person, and how such a vivid memory of being lifted to God in prayer can take a person into the future with strength.

For the affirmation of persons:

At the heart of prayer is our faith in a loving Father who wants to give good gifts to his children. You may wish to have each person in the group receive "good gifts" from fellow pilgrims as an affirmation of God's love and care. Let each person, in turn, be the recipient of "good gifts." (Example: Mary is our recipient. What gifts will we give her? Think about who Mary is, what she has contributed to the group, what needs and concerns she has expressed. Let as many as wish verbalize, and maybe even act out, the giving of these gifts. I take Mary's hands in mine and say, "Mary receive God's gift of forgiveness. Be free of the burden of guilt about your feeling of failure as a mother." Then someone else may wish to give Mary a gift by saying to Mary across the room: "Mary, I affirm you as a caring person and want to give you patience. Be patient with yourself, for God is patient with you.") Before you close your meeting consider what has been recorded about each person's experience in this six weeks, as well as the group commitment. Find some way to celebrate these breakthroughs.

Closing the meeting

Last week we passed the peace as our benediction, our blessing in parting. This week, close your meeting by a more spontaneous blessing. Go to every person in the group, say and do whatever you feel is appropriate for your parting blessing to this person. You may shake hands and say, "May you always be sensitive to the blessing of God's presence with you." Or, you may hold both hands of the person, look him or her in the eyes saying, "I love you and I know God loves you." Or, you may simply embrace the person and say nothing. In your own unique way, "bless" each person who has shared this journey with you.

Prayer - week 1.

Beginning: Two visions of prayer; Protestant: Praying for (things, people, self, etc.) Catholic: Praying about (God, Christ, themes, etc.)

Catholic

Mark Link: You: Prayer for Beginners + Others Who Have Forgotten How. Breaking Away.

Matthew Fox: On Being a Mystical, Musical Bear

Protestant

Maxie Dunnam: Workbook of Living Prayer

Rosiland Linker: Communicating Love Through Prayer

Dunnam's book takes 7 weeks - Oct. 5, 12, 19, 26 - Nov. 2-9. One week off (Thanksgiving week) and then begin the Advent study.

If you aren't prayed out by then; I think we'll begin a life of Jesus - from our perspective in January and decide after that what we'll do for Lent. Maybe the MCC Lenten group study - which hasn't been done here (if I can find it!)

Prayer is communicating love. Love for God, God's love for us, our love for each other.

God's love is unconditional; we are accepted, forgiven, & loved as we are. Talking to God is prayer, but so is sitting speechless at the feet of God, thinking about God, meditating on God or Christ, or even reading about God.

Prayer is a means of getting to know God.
To know about God is theology. To know
God (as operative in our own lives) is religion.
or faith.

Most of us ~~have~~ if we've been taught to
pray at all have been taught prayer
cliches. We pray habit prayers over meals,
at meetings, even in public worship &
often those prayers are meaningless. What
we are trying to do is to re-establish prayer
as meaningful.

Some words about prayer:

repetitious

impersonal

habitual

too conclusive

general

traditional

chiche

non-communicative

The greatest need we have is for love.
We become confused; we think God
cannot love us because some person
has not loved us. We confuse sexual
attractiveness & loveability, and confuse
loving & sex & possession. We openly
seek love in our youth and often settle
for security & companionship as we get older
but still we long for love.

To love is imperative. We must love or
perish. But most of us don't know
how to love & selfish love, giving love,
agape love. When we love ^{by doing the human} we are
vulnerable — we can be hurt,
misunderstood, & rejected — and we hurt
or try to manipulate others by our love.

There is a measure of getting to know how
to know about the things. To know
that for operation in our own time is not
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Mostly, we can't love others because we don't love ourselves. We can't love ourselves until we are certain that God loves us. We can learn that God loves us through prayer, and we can communicate love through prayer. Through prayer God becomes more real & is more often felt to be present. God is love and God gives Himself to us & we are loved. If love is to grow - we must then give it away. Love given away increases in depth & quality - we are communicating when we serve each other in love.

God is love. God loves you. God loves you! God is love & God offers acceptance, forgiveness and love, if we will listen & will accept.

* Hitherto you have asked nothing in my name; ask & you shall receive; that your joy may be full

Self acceptance: Paul Tournier's The Meaning of Persons: "Personality integration is not a simplification of the mind. On the contrary, it is a progressive realization of one's secret propensities, and a lucid & courageous acceptance of the totality of one's being, & all its complications & contradictions." We are always saint & sinner because there are human.

Last sheep
Last coin
Prodigal } parables of God's love.

Can God love us as we are?

Be willing to let God love you even when you consider yourself unworthy.

Prayer is our hearts responding to God's love.

Practical hints for Prayer

KISS - Keep it Simple, Stupid.

"Talk to God as a parent,
to Christ as a brother/sister,
to the Holy Spirit as a constant
companion."

Don't be afraid to Believe

T. Williams: Night of the Igwana

Hannah: Lignor isn't your problem, Mr. Shannon

Shannon: What's my problem, Miss Jelkes?

Hannah: The oldest one in the world -
the need to believe in something
or someone.

Lawrence Gould: We must stop gagging
on the word "spiritual"; we must
rediscover + reassert our faith.

R6 - "Processional Cataphoresis"

P. 6-7 Breaking Away.

Prayer Styles

Contemplation - Ignatius Loyola P. 35 You

Spiritual Reading - Teresa of Avila P. 53 You

Instructional Reading - P. 56 You

Inspirational Reading - Henri Nouwen, P. 59 You

Pre-Prayer Reading - Malcolm Boyd P. 60-61 You

Meditative Reading

Read a line or phrase at a time
apply it to your life
Speak to God about it.

Next week.

Begin workbook this week.
30 minutes on workbook
30 minutes on Roy. Reiker
30 minutes c Fr. Link

